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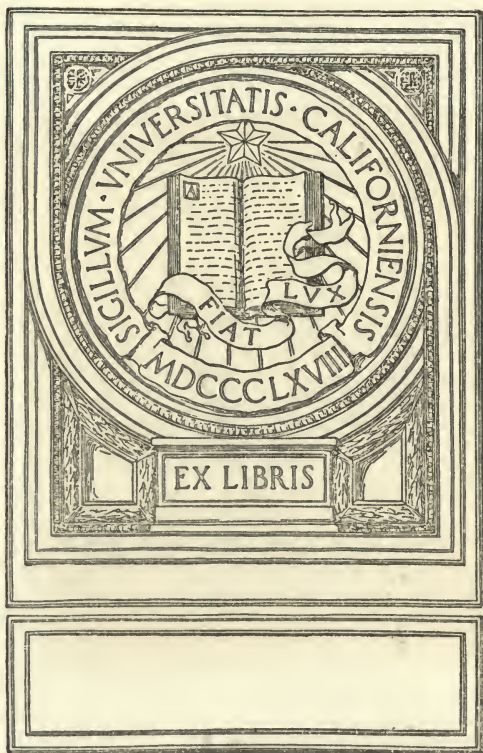
TIMES

IN

MIDDLE GEORGIA

RICHARD MALCOLM JOHNSTON

Pr



Some

Twain's Kind Heart.

The death of Richard Malcolm Johnston recalls a little story, which, perhaps, is not generally known, writes Frank L. Stanton in the Atlanta Constitution. At one time, when the distinguished writer had been prevailed on to give a reading in Baltimore, Thomas Nelson Page volunteered to assist him. But a death in Mr. Page's family prevented him from appearing in the entertainment. Mark Twain heard of it. The people of Baltimore had long wished to have Twain appear there, but he had steadfastly refused to resume his lectures. But he went on that occasion, for he appreciated the genius of Richard Malcolm Johnston, and, desiring to honor him, he left New York, at a great personal sacrifice, and appeared with him on that occasion. There never was such a crowded house in a Baltimore theater. When the entertainment was over Colonel Johnston, with his accustomed fairness and courtesy, tendered Twain the bulk of the receipts. "No," said Mark; "not one cent shall I receive. It is such a great honor to know a man like you that I am the one who owes you the debt of gratitude." "Well," said the colonel, "at least let me defray your expenses." "I have a through ticket," said Twain. "Good-by, and God bless you." That was Mark Twain.

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OLD TIMES IN MIDDLE GEORGIA

•The M Co. •

OLD TIMES IN MIDDLE GEORGIA

BY

RICHARD MALCOLM JOHNSTON

AUTHOR OF "DUKESBOROUGH TALES," "WIDOW GUTHRIE,"
"OLD MARK LANGSTON," ETC.

"Their best companions, innocence and health,
And their best riches, ignorance of wealth."

— *Deserted Village*

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MR. EBEN BULL'S INVESTMENTS

A STORY OF PHILEMON PERCH

MR. EBEN BULL'S INVESTMENTS

A STORY OF PHILEMON PERCH

For most men (till by losing rendered sager)
Will back their own opinions by a wager. — BEPPO.

I

SOMETIMES, when I hear people speaking of investments, I am reminded of some that, to a limited degree and without great ostentation, were wont, when I was a schoolboy of thirteen and there along, to be hazarded by a gentleman of our village; in one of which, apparently promising quick and good dividends, I ventured to take a chance for myself.

The Dukesborough school, kept by Mr. Whitcomb, a gentleman from Vermont, had a hundred pupils, boys and girls, the greater portion of whom were boarders. Although neither very strong nor well grown, I had been, during all the previous session, the swiftest runner among the boys, and it pleased me much to coincide with the general belief that I could not be overcome in a foot-race by any other boy near my

age, no matter where he came from. Among the new boys who had come in at the opening of the present term was Jack Withers, a year older than myself, but not any taller. He had been reared thus far upon a plantation bordering on Fulsom's Creek, seven or eight miles south of the village. If it had not been that I had come to like him so well before our trial of speed, I might have enjoyed more keenly the certain prospect of the defeat which must befall this champion of the new boys, between whom and the old there always was a rivalry which was as animated as it was brief in duration. He proved himself to be such a fine fellow that afterward I was thankful for having been so courteous in my first attentions. Having showed himself the equal of the best of the "olds" at all other sports, he beat, but only by a neck's length, the second best of our runners. After this he was notified that on the following Friday evening, if he should choose to do so, he might contest with the best nag that the "olds" had to present. The liking I had for this new boy led me to say to my friends that I hoped the contest might be had quietly beneath the red-oaks and hickories in the academy yard. But no. A champion, however inclined to be modest and forbearing, cannot control the solemn behests and mandates of his party, especially

when it is ruled by such a man as Mr. Eben Bull.

Since that time, long ago, I have travelled somewhat extensively both in the United States and abroad, and I can say with assurance, that I have never made acquaintance with a longer, slimmer, straighter, darker, more solemn-looking and more solemn-speaking person than Mr. Eben Bull. Not that, in point of fact, he was so very, very solemn. On the contrary, he was fond of fun, especially that of schoolboys, to whose vagaries he invariably was indulgent, and for which he was ever ready to bespeak indulgence from their parents and teachers. He professed to glory in witnessing trials of prowess of every kind. Mrs. Bowden, wife of the postmaster, with whom he boarded, used to tell how he would sit in her back porch and watch the contests of young pigs and of roosters of every age, and banter her husband, who was a semi-religious man, to make what he called "a' in-vestment" on the several issues. Claiming to be unambitious, yet he was free to speak of himself as sufficiently knowing upon subjects historical, political, agricultural, mercantile, mechanical, and others, including religious (though not a church-member) and even matrimonial, albeit a bachelor on the shady side of forty. When asked why he had never married

nor joined the church, he winked slowly, looked compassionately upon married men and church-members who happened to be present, and mumbled a few words intended to express the profundity with which he had searched into the depths of human nature. The solemnity of his speech was deepened by a habit of imparting a sighing and nasal preface to the beginning of his sentences and to other chosen words in them which made them sound as if the painful elaboration of his thoughts had induced asthma or some kindred pulmonic infirmity. An avowed patron of the "olds," he was yet quick to admit and receive into his confidence real manifest excellence among the "news." He liked my family much, and used to speak in highest praise of my fleetness. When he heard that the decisive race, in accordance with my wishes, was to be had on the academy grounds, he said to Tom Gatlin, our leader :

"Hum ! Tom, let 'em take it out up here at Bland's, whar everybody can see Phil run away from that chap from Fulsom's Creek. Phil Perch is entirely too modest ; and you tell him I say so."

That settled it, and after the school was dismissed Friday afternoon, we all repaired to Bland's, whose store was half-way down the only street of which Dukesborough had to boast. I look back now to that scene with some sadness

at the contempt I felt for myself after I had been so beaten. When Jack reached the goal, I, fifteen yards behind, put my hand to my heart, turned, and, coming back, looked at no face save one, which I could have avoided no more than a bird avoids the snake by whose charm it has been enchanted. Mr. Bull, having withdrawn to the steps of the piazza, stood and regarded me silently with his great black eyes, and, as I went on home, I could feel them shooting upon my back, not pity for my defeat, but anger, dire and deadly, for the dishonor of my friends and antecedents. I have lived to suffer the defeat of many a dear hope, but not one of them has ever inflicted a pain like that. Yet, when afterward I found that Jack said openly that he would fight any boy approximating his size who should taunt me, I loved him more than before. When I had left the field, Mr. Bull said to him :

“N—h, don’t say nothin’ ’bout it, Jack ; but I invessed two dollars along of Jeemes Bland on that contemptible boy, and I’ve got to git back the invessment from Jeemes or somebody.”

The friendship between Jack and me grew more and more fond, and it consoled me to reflect that the garland I had worn could have been snatched only by him who proved to be as gentle and manly as he was stalwart and agile. In my mind I compared him with the most fa-

famous runners of whom I had been reading in Lemprière's "Classical Dictionary," particularly Milanion, who, by the help of Venus, had run the race with Atalanta. If not the first runner in the Dukesborough school, I was second, I thought, to the best in the world — and he my friend.

A mile and a half beyond the Ogeechee, which was equidistant from our village, dwelt Mr. Jones Huckaby, friend of Mr. Bull. A justice of the peace and a farmer, he sought to supplement the income from his office and farm with a small store, and with occasional, moderate, cautious investments, like those of Mr. Bull, on neighborhood nags, game chickens, and other animals, when discussions upon their comparative excellences became to that degree animated. Occasionally the two made joint investments of from half a dollar to five dollars. More often, however, they had been opposed. It so happened that the balance just now was in Mr. Huckaby's favor to the amount of six dollars and thirty-seven and a half cents — a balance which Mr. Bull thought he owed it to himself to remove. People on the further border of the river often visited Dukesborough, which was much nearer to them than their own county-seat. Mr. Huckaby, especially, was addicted to riding over, taking back in his saddle-bags papers of pins, strings

of buttons, skeins of silk, and maybe half a dozen bunches of twine, that, after a fair discount from Mr. Bland, it would hardly have paid to send for all the way to Augusta. But his main purpose in such visitations was to have chattings with his friend, Mr. Bull.

"I'm always glad to see Jones Huckaby," Mr. Bull often remarked kindly; "the poor feller is natchul fond of news, and he unfortunate live whar they ain't any, or mighty little to be had."

During one of these visits Mr. Bull spoke of Jack Withers, and intimated a willingness to invest in him on proper conditions. Mr. Huckaby then remarked that there was a boy over on his side of the river who, people said, could get over ground right well, and he would not be surprised if he could beat the Fulsom Creek champion.

"Feel like invessin' anything on that, Jones?"

He spoke as carefully as possible, meaning to hide his eagerness. Mr. Huckaby named a dollar, but, forced by the other's contempt for small figures, and in view of the advantage to the store, where the race must be had, of collecting a considerable number from both sides of the river, rose to ten. From his huge pocket-book Mr. Bull took out and threw down a ten-dollar bill upon the counter of Mr. Bland, who was to be stake-holder. From many a pocket Mr. Huck-

aby eked out what would cover it, sighing the while with painful apprehension.

"Eb Bull," he said, in humble but manly sense of every freeman's right to utter his mind even in the presence of men enjoying society advantages so far superior, "you town people has a contempt of country folks like me that has to make their livin' by the sweat o' their brow; but — but" — then Mr. Huckaby shook his head, as if there were a few things in rural existence that the proudest city aristocrat could have no just occasion to despise.

"M- no, Jones," answered Mr. Bull; "there you're mistaken, and it's because of our manner. M- of course we has our privileges, n- and our advantages, n- and — but yit we has our respects of some country people, n- that they has the ambition like you has, to git out, or try to git out, of their ign'ance."

Talking to Jack Withers afterward, Mr. Bull said: "I had to flatter up Jones Huckaby powerful before I could git the fellow up to the p'int of invessin' to a figger as would make it worth while to cross over the river that fur. Them country people is awful skeery. My money is invessed in you, boy, and when the thing's over, we'll all try n- see if we can't have some fun in a way not too public and p'inted."

II

THE race was set for the Saturday following the next ensuing, Mr. Huckaby asking, and Mr. Bull allowing, the intervening days for getting in such new supplies as were likely to be in demand at the store. Our boys were elated. Only Jack Withers, noble fellow that he was, declined to indulge triumph in advance over a boy that he had heard was quite poor.

A mile beyond the river was an outlying field of fifty or more acres covered with a growth of "old-field" pines, beneath which were innumerable strawberry-vines. Thither, during the season of that fruit, young persons in the neighborhood often repaired. In the early part of the week it was given out that several gentlemen were to make an excursion to this field, and were willing to take with them as many of the schoolboys as could get leave. The solemn mystery with which this announcement was repeated several times by Mr. Bull was the subject of some pleasant comment among the ladies.

It happened at the time that I was indebted to the amount of twenty-five cents to Sally Burch, a decent, elderly colored woman who made and vended ginger-cakes at her home near

the church. This sum had been overdue longer than she or I had expected when the credit was given. In those times pocket-money was not at all usual among planters, even those with large plantations, because, getting their income from cotton only once in the year, after the payment of store-accounts, the rest — except a reservation nearly always too little for contingent cash expenses — was invested in other property. We boys had our allowance on Christmas and Fourth of July, but not many were able usually to make both ends meet at the recurrence of one of these happy seasons, so remote from its predecessor. On this occasion it occurred to me that an investment of a quarter quietly put upon Jack Withers might not be too grossly improper, would be entirely safe, and would enable me to square my account with Sally Burch, into whose eyes for some time past, I had not been able to look with composure. Therefore, at nightfall on Friday, I approached Uncle Gill, our head man-servant, for a loan. Preliminary to the application, I carried to the stable corn from the crib and fodder from the loft, and, after getting a word of praise, spoke my mind.

“Marse Philly,” answered the old man, pausing, with currycomb in hand, “whut, name o’ goodness, you want wid money more’n whut your pappy ’low you?”

"I want to make an investment, Uncle Gill," I replied.

"A wes — you want make me believe your ma don't make wes'co'ts enough for you?"

I made him understand that, instead of a waistcoat, I had heard of something that was going very cheap, for nothing indeed, as it were, and which I should like to buy with as little noise as possible made about it. After some reflection, taking from his home-knit woollen purse a quarter, he handed it to me, saying:

"I done made up my mind not to bodder myself lendin' to white boys, ev'y sence de trouble I had 'long wid two un 'em, which I loant one un 'em a thrip en 'nother a seb'n pens, en dee kep' on puttin' me off, en puttin' me off, whell I had to make out like I gwine to dey pappies; en dee knowed dey pappies would mighty nigh burn 'em up wid de hick'ry for borrowin' money en not payin' back, en special from niggers, en all dat, befo' I could killect my debt. But I know you ain' gwine to project wid me if you can he'p it. Take de quarter, en go 'long wid you, en maybe de man, when he see de money in your hand, he'll fall yit funder. People, when dey gwine tradin' dee has to study 'bout sich things, mon."

Many another coin of that and less volume was gotten in that and similar ways before the

eventful day. Not that we were led by any special words of Mr. Bull, who was not a man to urge children to go directly against the known wishes of their parents and teachers; but the deep solemnity of his words and looks, imparting great contentment, the sarcastic pity he expressed for the ignorant temerity of Mr. Huckaby — these and other things made us note that his mind was enjoying an assurance which victory already achieved and acknowledged could not have enhanced. Along with this was our confidence in Jack, which was as boundless as the skies.

Our party decided not to visit the strawberry-fields until after the race. All of the boys except Jack travelled on foot, Mr. Bull, for the sake of keeping him entirely fresh, taking him over in a gig. We found quite as large a company as we were already gathered. Among them, I noticed, moving about apparently with some anxiety, a pitiful-looking boy of about my height, but thinner. On a sort of sugar-loaf head was an irregular crop of hair of every shade of white, surmounted by a wool hat the rim of which in front for the breadth of his forehead had been torn away. His upper lip made a sort of arch over two of the biggest, longest, whitest teeth I have ever seen. His copperas-dyed, home-made clothes, short in the

legs and arms, were out at the knees and elbows. His bowed legs looked like two long parentheses.

"P'int out your nag, Jones," said Bull, when we had rested several minutes.

"Here, Peeky," called Mr. Huckaby, and the boy I had noticed came creeping. Mr. Huckaby whispered to Mr. Bull that he was very timid, and was afraid that if he should be beaten, as he expected, the town boys might bully and otherwise maltreat him. Indeed he would not consent to make the race until assured that the goal should be in the direction of his own home, so that he might avoid more easily the consequences of defeat.

"This him?" asked Mr. Bull, seeming to be rather taken aback by the strange figure that presented itself.

"That's him," answered Mr. Huckaby. Then he said to the boy: "Needn't be oneasy, Peeky. These is all good friendly people, and wouldn't hurt nary ha'r on your head."

After inspecting him for some time with severest scrutiny, as a philosopher might ponder withal a newly discovered, unique, abnormal specimen of animate existence, Mr. Bull, in a very deep tone, asked:

"W — what's your name, my son?"

"Fee — Feekey Gwiz — Gwizzle, sir." It sounded much like the whining of a cat.

Mr. Bull grunted painfully, and involuntarily took a step backward; recovering himself, he said, "Feefee who?"

"His name is Peeky Grizzle, Eb," Mr. Huckaby answered for him. "He have a kind of stoppage in his speech, and are ruther tonguetied; but them don't hender Peeky from bein' of a nice, smart, good boy, not they don't."

"How old you call yourself?" asked Mr. Bull.

"Mam — mammy say I fo'teen; dad — daddy say I worse'n dat."

"That's jest about my ric'lection of Peeky's age," said Mr. Huckaby. "My opinion of Peeky Grizzle is, he's just about fourteen year old, and a leetle on the rise, and a more biddable boy than him I don't know nowhars."

Peeky glanced with rapid alternation toward Mr. Huckaby and Mr. Lazenberry, a neighbor and special friend, and nervously awaited Mr. Bull's further interrogatings. Mr. Bull slowly lifted his head, looked up toward the zenith, and with the most solemn thoughtfulness stroked his chin through the full length of his fingers. It was evident that some perturbation had come over his mind. At length he looked down again upon Peeky, and said:

"Ya-as. You ruther take me — by surprise. But don't you be oneasy, my son; h'm — them boys they ain't no harm in them, ef they is town

boys. They jes come over here for a little fun ; that's all. If you git beat, m- or if you beat, I'll see to it myself that you ain't hurted ; and not only that, but you shall have a gingy-cake, and a segyar to boot, if you've learnt how to smoke yit."

Then, taking Jack aside, he said darkly : "Jack, them legs o' yourn got to work every muscle in 'em. They ain't never any tellin' what's in one o' these here wild old-field colts, special sech a ontimely-lookin' one as this here. M- Feefeeky, or whatsomever his name is, my opinion is that ef you git away from him m- you got to git away from him at the first jump."

When all preliminaries had been settled, a hundred yards were stepped off. The contestants were to break by me, Mr. Huckaby and one of our boys were to watch the starting, and Mr. Bull and a trans-Ogeechean went forward to stand at the farther end of the limit. Peeky gave a perceptible shiver as he and Jack joined hands. When the break was made, Peeky, who would not part from his hat, giving a momentary glance at Jack, made first for his own extreme side of the road, and then—for home. Call his movement running—that is, human running—I should not. It was flight. Yes, sirs, flight! Tucking low his back and shoulders, lifting his face aloft, he extended both his arms

at length, and with his open hands, their palms turned backward, fanned behind him the air through which he sped like a swallow skimming a mill-pond. Jack, after taking not more than a dozen strides, convinced that he might as well try to overtake a frightened antelope, stopped, and, turning back, cried :

“Boys, why in thunder don’t you all laugh? Don’t you see that I’m doing my level best to laugh myself, and can’t? I know your money is all gone; but if you’ll join those other fellows, and raise a good laugh, I’ll treat the crowd to ginger-cakes.”

He had refrained from investing in himself, as he said, out of decency. We raised a shout that was hoped to make up in sound what it lacked in heartiness, and the other side joined in deafening chorus. But that Peeky Grizzle! Ah, sirs, you should have seen him then! Turning back one eye momentarily at the sound, his legs and his hands seemed actually to flutter as he swept along. Dipping his head slightly as he passed by Mr. Bull, on and on he fled, along the level two hundred yards in further extent, up the hill of fifty or sixty in ascent, then disappeared from our view. Not less interesting was Mr. Eben Bull. Urged by a necessity as stern as fate, when the fugitive passed, he turned and looked at him in silence as long as

he could be seen. Then in the loudest tones, and as piteous as ever came from mouth of the most beseeching suppliant, he shouted :

“M- why don’t — m- what make — m- can’t the ongodly, everlastin’ thing — m- can’t it stop itself ?”

With slow, offended majesty he stalked back toward the store. Jack, after handing Mr. Huckaby half a dollar for Peeky, hurriedly invested the balance of his money in cakes, and then said :

“Let’s be off from this place, boys. I wouldn’t meet old man Bull now for five dollars, and I wouldn’t ride back with him, even if he wanted me, for a hundred.”

We heard the tittering behind us as we were hastening away. When we got out of sight we slacked our pace, and taking out our cakes, ate them in humbleness.

“They don’t make cakes over here like old Aunt Sally Burch,” said Tom Gatlin, and there was not a dissentient voice.

WE heard afterward of Mr. Bull’s doings at the store. When he had reached it, he lifted his head heavily from the subdued attitude in which it had been hanging, and, looking around, inquired :

“M- whar’s all our boys ?”

When told how and why Jack had hurried us away, he said, with a profound sigh :

“Needn’t done no sich a thing. N- I’d ’a’ not scolded Jack Withers, h- not nary single word.”

Turning upon Mr. Huckaby, he frowned dismally with what seemed to be the pain of suppressing his righteous indignation. In a few moments he said :

“M- Jones Huckaby, you took the ’vantage of me. N- that creetur ain’t folks. M- blest if I believe it’s folks ; n- that is, in the gen’l way of folks in gen’l. N- Jack Withers, nor nary ’nother human, they jest as well run ag’ins’ thunder. My opinion is that sich a onreg’lar creeter as that, if it was left to a n- skidule o’ men that makes a practice o’ understandin’ and rig’latin’ invessments n- accordin’ to the scale and the code o’ honor, they’d say, if not a forfeit, it ought leastways to be a draw.”

“Oh now, come now, Eb, that’s your town, high —”

“Oh, I’m not a-gwine to make a great to-do about it, exceptin’ to express my n- opinions. I left down a gap in my calc’lations and you stepped on me onexpected. Let her go. Whar you supposin’ the thing tuck up at, n- Jones ?”

“Home,” answered Mr. Huckaby. “He’ll not take up this side o’ thar.”

"How fur's that?"

"About four mile."

"M- well, it's about thar by now. Did you know how it could git over ground?"

"Why, no; that is, not egzack, Eb. I has never see him run, not myself, tell to-day; but I've heerd some o' his neighbors, special Jim Lazenberry here, talk about him, and which they perceeded on to say, that when him or his mammy want a rabbit, Peeky take out a little fise-dog he have to jump him, and then him pick him up. Whut make him keep on home, he were afeered o' them town boys. He's a ruther skeery kind o' boy, a not being so very peert in his mind."

"N- hit mayn't be peert in what mind it have; m- but hit make up in hits laigs, which if I ever see a pa'r o' laigs the same as pot-hooks, hit's his'n; tell the truth, I were ruther feard o' them laigs when I first lay eye on 'em."

After revolving with death-like solemnity a thought in his mind, he said:

"M- Jones Huckaby, and you, Jeemes Lazenberry, n- and you gentlemen, and boys, n- one and all you hear me. Hit's my last and ownlest invessment. If I got to git broke and busted to boot, hit's got to come in a natchul way. Far' you well."

He kept his vow. Even down to old age he

was a frequent admonisher against investing in feats or games of chance of every sort.

“N- no, sir,” hundreds of times he was heard to say; “h- my advices is ag’ins’ invessment always. I has had the expe’unce of ’em. The de-ficulty about invessments is, when a man is certain in his mind n- that he know every blessed thing about whut he’s invessin’ on, n- them’s the very time when he don’t know n- one cussed thing about it; and they bound to break whoever foller ’em.”

Ay? You’d like to hear how Uncle Gill’s investment in me turned out? Well, I am glad to be able to make satisfactory answer. The matter was talked about so much that I soon confessed my part to my mother, and besought her forgiveness and protection against my father when it should get to his ears. After a serious, affectionate rebuke, I obtained both under a pledge not to do so again. Then with the half-dollar she gave me, I liquidated the debts owed to Uncle Gill and Sally Burch. My own reformation was as quick, and thus far has been as steadfast, as Mr. Bull’s. From that day, borrowing that gentleman’s oft-repeated asseveration, I have never “invessed.”

MR. CUMMIN'S RELINQUISHMENT

MR. CUMMIN'S RELINQUISHMENT

MR. JOHN CUMMIN had been called first "Uncle Jack," and subsequently "Uncle Jacky" long before I was ever born. He was a stoutish, plain, tolerably educated, thoroughly honest, intensely good-hearted, well-to-do country gentleman of whom all of his acquaintances used to speak with much respect, even much affection, although he was nothing in this wide world but an old bachelor; because, you must know, he had not become so from any wilful neglect of such matrimonial opportunities as had come, or nearly had come, in his way in the times of his youth, manhood, and even incipient old age. According to tradition, besides having, when a young man, a good property and first-rate habits, he was good-looking enough for any young woman in the whole neighborhood whose demands in that line were not extravagantly unreasonable. He had not been without several romantic experiences which had ended contrary to his many hopes and even a few of his expectations. Some sadness, at last become painless, was suspected

to linger within his heart in recollection of one of these experiences in particular; yet upon the whole he lived ever in a reasonable contentment, and not seldom indulged in jesting where he was entirely sure that it would do no hurt. I happened to find out one day that, along with the sadness just mentioned, if there were not, there very well might be, some pride in recalling a sacrifice once made by him in the face of a sorely trying temptation.

Knowing me from my birth, and being a dear friend of our family, when I came to the Bar he took much interest in my success, occasionally bringing or advising others to carry to me cases of not great importance. At such times he would speak jocosely about thus:

“Here’s a little somethin’ I brought you to try your hand on. They ain’t much in it: I don’t know if I hadn’t about as soon lose it as win it, and so I brought it to you. Umph! you understand.”

One day, some years afterward, being now quite an old man, he came into my office in order to give me instructions about his last will and testament, which he wished me to write. One of the items led me to inquire how it was that he had never married.

He was silent for several moments, then with something of a smile on his face answered:

“Well, now, my young lawyer, what you asked you might call jest one single lone quest'on by itself; but I should, that is, me myself, I should call it a many a quest'on; and if I was to go over all of 'em and tell you all what I done, and all what I didn't do, and then turn round and norate all the whys and the wherefores on the lines o' them quest'ons, it would be a biogerphy — yes, sir, a perfect biogerphy, and nothin' short o' that; that is, you understand, I mean if I was to begin at the beginnin', which you might call it my first sproutin' days, on and on, down twell the time of my dryin' up for good, which you mayn't believe it, but it were, off and on, forty year and better. Oh, you may lift up your eyebrow, for you young people think time a man git to be forty and the rise, it's too late for him to be keerin' about such a thing as marryin' and the havin' of a wife, and he better be spendin' o' his time in lookin' out how he's to stand in the next world. And that's jest where you're all monst'ous bad mistaken, as I know by expe'unce.”

After a pause, in which he seemed to be indulging a remote retrospect, he continued :

“Yes, yes, indeed. I begun soon and I helt on late. It first struck me when I were about fifteen year old, and it struck me deep — deep as you ever see a colt stuck in the mire of a

creek-bottom when it seem like he can't pull hisself out, not by his own strenk. And albe' I were as healthy a boy as you ever knowed, I got weakly and puny, and I lost great quantity of my appertite for my victuals, and I tried to write some po'try, but fort'nate couldn't, because I never learnt how, and — well, sir, fact is, I jest ketched the moloncholy all thoo and thoo me, that I did. But one thing I knewed for cert'n, and that were, if my father was to happen to find out the whole fix I were in, he'd take me out it with the hick'ry, if it couldn't be took out no other way, and that speedy. And so I swallowed much of it as I could, a-knowin' well as if anybody told me so that I had begun to bark too soon, and up the wrong tree at that; for the girl were six year older than me, and 'tweren't so very long time before she got married, and so then, why you know, I jest had to give it up, of course; and I done it like a honer'ble man and a honer'ble boy'll always do, which if he didn't, somebody ought to shoot him, which that have been my opinion about sech a thing from fur back as I can ric'lect.

“Now, that were my first off-start in that kind o' business, if a body might name sech a thing by the name o' *business*. Didn't I tell you if I was to answer all your quest'on, it'd be a biogerphy?”

I assured him that I was much interested in his talk, and that I would like to hear more of it, if the recital were not painful or disagreeable to him.

“Oh, no; oh, no. It ain't no painful to me now, and, as to that, no dis'greeble, if you keer to know about it. I done got over sech as that a long ago. Well, if you want me to tell you jest for your own cur'osity, it weren't so very long before I got in ag'in, and I kept on a-gittin' in, sometimes ruther mild, but 'casional strong as piz'n. For my expe'unce is that this here thing people calls love it takes holt of people in differ'nt and war'ous ways. Sometimes it ain't much more trouble to a feller than a bad cold, or a crick in the neck, or a bile on the elbow; which sech as that is ill-convenant, to be sure, matter o' course, but he know it ain't a-goin' to kill him out and out, nor run him a-ravin' distracted; but if he'll go 'long and have patient, he'll git over it after a while, more or less. Then ag'in the thing strike him and it break out all over him; and he jest know something's got to be done or they ain't no tellin' what'll happen; I've had all the symp-tims, and I know 'em same as a book.

“But the de'ficulty — that is, I may say, the de-ficuldest thing — with me were, I were never peert enough at the business like women want a

feller to be ; and many time when I have been studyin' about how to fix up and express my mind like it seemed to me a man by good rights ought to express hisself on sech a ser'ous and solemn occasion, why, sir, another feller have come in that were peerter in his words, and in his motions, and in his ways in gen'l, and he have used a whole lot o' dictionary language I never learnt, and the first I knowed, he have over-persuaded my sweetheart, and she have flewed away with him — clean away."

He waved his hand sadly yet uncomplainingly to the far-away fugitives, and thus proceeded :

"You want to know who they was that got in ahead o' me that way the oftenest? Well, sir, it was widowers, that somehow they know how to make theirselves the overpersuadin'est to women of all that goes. Why, sir, they can git up a cry whensoever they want to, which women can't always stand up against sech as that, and they know it ; and the older they git, the younger the female they'll choosen for their companion if they can, and the pitifuller they'll put up their cryin' to 'em. Yes, sir ; that's my expe'unce o' them widowers."

He shook his head at thought of the utter emptiness of endeavors on the part of such as he to compete with rivals so experienced and artful.

“And so it kept on, first one way, then another, ontwell I got to forty,—goin’ on to forty-one,—and people begun to call me old bachelor, when I were no more a-wantin’ to be one o’ them creaturs than you do this minute (that people say is already done engaged), not one grain more: that I didn’t, because I always did believe of all things the good Lord in his wisdom ever make, they are the driest and un-uselessest. And then some of the young girls and boys they must begin to call me Uncle Jack, and it was Uncle Jack this, and Uncle Jack that; yit, sick as it made me to hear ’em, I darnesn’t let on, a-knowin’ if I did, it would only make ’em double it on me. But it had the eeffect, all I could do to help myself, to make me yit slower in all my gaits; and when, along up to fifty and the rise, they sot in a-callin’ of me Uncle Jacky, I suspicioned strong that exceptin’ somethin’ turned up soon and onexpected like, my time for sech as that would be up. And sure enough it did; that is, I thought it did, and it come a mighty nigh a-doin’ of it.”

There was an appealing look on his face as in softened tone he proceeded:

“The last time my mind were worked up in that kind o’ style, it were where I come the nighest, and it were the closetest and the try-

in'est of 'em all. You needn't tell anybody I told you about it—at all ewents, twell arfter I'm gone. I were fifty-six—in my fifty-seb'nt'. It were Matildy Owens, who she were then twenty-two. She were a perfect fa'r pink for beautiful and sweet—that she were; and she were sensible, and she were modest, and she were dilicate, and she were home-stayin', and she were industr'ous. Fact is, to my belief twell yit her ekal weren't in all around, and that's sayin' a heap; for in them days, as for pooty, nice, industr'ous girls—well, all I got to say, I don't see them now to compar' with 'em, that I don't. I been havin' my eye on Matildy Owens four or five year, and then I sot in a-courtin' of her jest because I loved her to that that I couldn't keep from it. I had a plenty o' prop'ty, and I knowed this. I could make her parrents, well as her, have more comforts. <They was poor, but they lived decent. It were my meanin' to pay her father out o' all debt, and help him fix up his house better, and some other ways he needed. When him and her ma found out what were on my mind, they was willin' for me to have her, and they ruther had been a-persuadin' of her to that eeffect.> And so, when I put the quest'on down to her pine-blank, she said that yes she'd have me, and she said it squar' out and out, calm,

same like I'd asked her about the weather or the time o' day. Tell the truth, it were the happiest of all my born days, and I never forgot it: that I never did. She have never—that is, to my face—Matildy Owens have never called me Uncle Jacky, nor not even Uncle Jack, and that made me warm up to her the closter, and let me feel I weren't so very everlastin' too old for her, that it did. And I said to myself, 'Jack Cummin, you are gittin' ruther oldish, if not quite yit beginnin' to git old, and Matildy Owens is young; but you can be good to Matildy, and not git jealous of her because she's got and is ableeged to have young ways, which you hain't, and natchul can't; and when it come time for you to die off and leave her, you can leave her with a good prop'ty and a plenty for her parrents to live on, and so my opinion is you can take the resk.' Now, that's what I said to myself."

Here the old man paused and rubbed his head, as if embarrassed by a regret which his rehearsal of a dear experience made appear to be deeper than he had supposed. Then, continuing, he said:

"Well, sir, I begun to think about it with the ser'ousness that a man had ought to always think about sech a matter, because marryin' is a ser'ouser and a solem'er business than some people

look at it, when a man put on the best things he can rake up and he call on God A'mighty to testify for him and to stand by him. I tell you now that at sech a time a man have got — well, he jest *have* to putt hisself right on the squar'. That's what come to me to try to do arfter thinkin' about it in the ser'ous way I been a-talkin' to you, and that's what final I did do a'cordin' to my ability."

After another brief pause, he cleared his throat with some violence and resumed :

"They ain't much more of it to tell; but what they is, it's to the p'int. There were a young fellow—you know Sam Bowers. A th'ivin' man, and a good citizen, Sam is. It were him — that same Sam Bowers. Now, Sam he were in love with Matildy, and that to a pow'ful extent. But he were poor like the Owenses, and when I took to goin' over there freckwent and he suspicioned what was up, Sam drapped out, he did. I were ruther sorry for Sam; for he were good-hearted, toler'ble industr'ous, and uncommon good-lookin'. Some said that if Sam had the prop'ty to back him up, to their opinion he could cut in now, late as it were, and git Matildy; and them words come to my year. And so, when, as I tell you now, if I knowed myself, I were no more jealous o' Matildy than I am o' you this minute,

yit it putt me to thinkin' a sight ser'ouser than before; and as the time were comin' along for the app'intin' o' the day, it seem like I couldn't think about not another blessed thing, not only in the daytime, but of a night long arfter I went to bed; and when I'd wake up of a mornin' I'd go right straight to thinkin' about it ag'in, twell it seem like to me, if somethin' weren't done, my very senses was goin' to give way, and that in short.

“Ahem! ahe-e-em! Final one mornin' I rid over there. Matildy met me, the same calm modest as ever. I said, ‘Howdy, Matildy?’ and I set down in a cheer. I darsn't take holt of her hand; for I do think, on my soul, her hand, spite o' the work she done, it were the softest and affectionest I ever helt in mine endurin' all my lifetime. And so I never teched it; but I told her to take a seat, and when we had passed a few words, like people always does when they jest met and howdy'd, I looked at her squar', and I said, ‘Matildy, I come over this mornin' to ask you a solemn quest'on, and it's if do you think you like me well enough to marry me?’ Well, sir, the child turned pale. Yit she said she thought she did; leastways, she hoped she did, and she were a-prayin' every day and every night to the good Lord to help her to do her juty by me. And then I says to her, ‘Matildy, they

tell me Sam Bowers is in love with you, but the feller is poor and have therefore helt back, thinkin' that, if nothin' else, would hender him from makin' the connection.' Well, sir, from white she turned red, red as any rose you ever see, and I see some water in her eyes. What you reckon I done then? I tried to look unconcerned, when, fact is, I were a-bilin' over all inside o' me. And then I says to her, 'Matildy, my child, it won't do. You've tried honest to love me, and you can't. I might have knew, and I ought to have knew, it were ag'inst nater to do it; I'm thankful, and God A'mighty bless you for tryin' it. Now let me tell you somethin': I'm a-goin' to git on my horse, and I'm a-goin' straight from here to Sam Bowers's, and I'm a-goin' to tell Sam that I'll let him have the money to buy a piece o' land, and put up a decent little house, and stock it with furnicher and things him and you'll want to start with, and then I'm a-goin' to send Sam right straight here to you.' Them's about the wery words I said to her. Well, sir, she riz, she did, and she cried, and she said that no, she wanted me to do no sech, but to let things stand jest like they were a-standin' then. You see, the poor child she wanted to act perfect honer'ble, and I never loved her before like I loved her then — that I never did, and the good Lord know it. And

when I riz to go, she helt out her hand, and she putt up her lips like I might kiss 'em one time. But I helt up my hand so, jest so, and I turned away from her, and I said, 'No, Matildy, no; I've done give you up to Sam, and Sam mightn't like it.' And I never told her good-by. Seem to me like I didn't have the strenk.

"Ahem! a-a-haam! And when I got to Sam Bowers, he were in the field a-ploughin' of a colt he been breakin'; and it weren't more'n a quarter of a' hour before Sam jerked that colt out of the plough, slung the trace-chains acrost his shoulders, lit on his back, said thanky and good-by to me, galloped to the house, shucked hissself out his workin'-clothes, slid hissself into his Sunday's, and flew over to the Owenses. That were what Sam Bowers done, a-knowin' that well he might.

"And then I rid back home. I had been a kind o' tryin' to fix up things there a leetle bit, so they wouldn't look quite so thin and bach'lor-like. I got up some new crock'ry, and some new cal'ker curt'ns, and a bolt o' kyarpetin' to put down in the big room; and when I throwed my eyes around, everything, special them new things, looked so lonesome that I went to my bed, and I lay down on it, and I cried like a child, that I did. And it seem like to me I couldn't have stood it, exceptin' for

thinkin' I been doin' what it were plain my juty to do as a honer'ble man before God A'mighty. Because it seem like to me, if I'd 'a' took Matildy, it would not be so very diff'ent from the buyin' of a' innercent little lamb and a-sackerficin' of it; and I said to myself, 'Jack Cummin, no, if they have to be a sackerficin', let it be you, and not Matildy; let it be the old, and not the young.' And when I done that, I felt better in here, right in here."

And he placed his hand softly on his breast.

"Well, well, time for me to be a-leavin'; but I'll add a few, jest only a few. That's been twenty year ago — yes, mighty nigh twenty-one. Sam and Matildy has done well, mighty well. You know what a respect'ble, fine, th'ivin' man Sam Bowers is. They has had five children, and one of 'em, a mighty pooty boy baby he were, they named arfter me; but, don't you know, time he got to be a year old or sech a matter, poor little feller, he ketched the croup and died, that he did.

"And now, if you're tired, blame yourself for askin' me sech a long quest'on; and you know now how come I to tell you to put down that itom in my will, a-leavin' o' five thousand dollars to Matildy. But that's to be betwix' me and you — leastways twell arfter I'm gone."

MR. PATE'S ONLY INFIRMITY

MR. PATE'S ONLY INFIRMITY

Yet hath my night of life some memory, . . .

My dull deaf ears a little use to hear. — *Comedy of Errors*.

OLD Mr. Pate, until his late and only infirmity, was the most even-tempered man in all our neighborhood. As well as I can remember, nobody knew or heard of his having been thrown at any time into a rage, at least with one of his own race. His resentment—what there was in it that was at all deadly—may have been kindled momentarily, now and then, by a sheep-killing hound, a fence-breaking steer, or some sneaking four-footed invader of his wife's hen-house; but that was all. Things might go awry outside or inside of his family, at which some people might be tempted to use a bit of profane language, yet, although he could maintain his rights with sufficient judicious firmness, he did so with equal mildness. Wrapping himself in virtues known to himself, as well as to others, he used, when hearing of a stormy passion into which a neighbor had been flung, to smile calmly, and comment upon the uselessness,

not to call it foolishness, in a person punishing his own self for other folks's doings.

He habitually spoke of the Creator in terms of much praise, and even expressed himself as thankful for what, if he had not done it for him pointedly, he had kindly allowed him to do for himself. He liked to see others join the church, and on revival occasions was known sometimes gently to urge young persons of both sexes to heed calls for mourners. He might have become a member long ago, except that for such a thing in a man like himself he felt that there was no earthly necessity. Contemplating his exemplary deportment, observed through the successes of seventy years and more, he was living in serene trust of many more as placidly felicitous as those now sitting lightly upon his honored head. One of his calm boasts was that he had enjoyed the society of two as good wives as the one wife of any other man under the sun, the former up to fifty, at her demise another, between whom — except as to a few details of no sort of importance, but rather operating as interesting, pleasant foils — he could never see, as he expressed it, "one single blessed ioty of diff'ence." Fond both of the hearing and the imparting of news, good, bad, and indifferent, he wished to know as much as was possible of things occurring outside of his own experience,

and it had been a strong support to what few troubles he had had, to note that other people had theirs also, and especially that they made more complainings than he did. All of his children were now grown, married, and living near in peace and prosperity.

Yet the prophecy of labor and sorrow to come after three score and ten ! How insidious often, yet always how inevitable ! A slight cold taken one day, like hundreds and hundreds that during the last sixty years he had known how to knock speedily into cocked hats with pepper-tea and hoarhound candy, after yielding to those efficacious remedies at all points save one, fastened upon that, and refused obstinately to go away. This was his left ear, and I regret to have to add that his right, whether from too intense sympathy with its twin brother, or reduced by continued loans extended to it, declined in time to like condition.

Mr. Pate, brave man that he was, scornful of trifles, went ahead for a while just the same as ever, ignoring a state of things which, unexpected and undeserved, a man of his energy and resolve was bound to overcome in no great while. But one day his daughter, Mrs. Betsey Runnells, who dwelt a mile distant, came over to see them all, and, after receiving several inaccurate answers — once or twice none at

all — to her questionings, was moved to remark thus :

“Pa, what in this world is getting to be the matter with you since you had that last cold that you answer people’s questions so curious, and sometimes don’t seem to know they’ve asked you anything? It’s either that you’ve got to paying mighty little attention to people when they’re talking to you, or the fact is you’re getting deaf. One of the things is certain and no doubt about it.”

“No sech a thing, Betsey. It’s no sech a thing. It’s that you all don’t speak cle’r and distinct like you used to do ; but you’ve all got to mumblin’ and chawin’ your words to that that a body can’t always tell what’s it you’re talkin’ about. I can hear well as I ever did when people open their mouth, and let their words come out cle’r. The fau’t’s not in my years. It’s in your all’s mouth, and I wish you all jest stop it, that I do. Nonsense !”

Now sharp words like these were entirely out of Mr. Pate’s habit, in his family or elsewhere. Devoted to him as all were, thereafter, when addressing him particularly, they elevated their voices, sometimes above what was needful, and then he took offence of another sort.

“What in this whole blessed and everlasting world have got into you all jest only here lately,

that when you ain't a-whisperin' at me you bawl out to me the same if the house was afire, or you made out like you thought I'd done gone stone deaf? I wish to goodness you could all be reason'ble with your woices. I'm no gate-post."

Self-delusions, easiest of all and sweetest, cannot abide always, even when nurtured and hugged with affection. The occasion of removal in this case seemed to Mr. Pate particularly mournful. Accustomed from youngest manhood to waken from his sleep at earliest cock-crowing, at the breakfast-table one morning, the last of several over-sleepings, he said to his wife:

"My dear, what's become of all the roosters, or what ails 'em, that jest here for a fortni't or so they've quit crowin' of a mornin'? And as for the old Dominicker, I hain't even laid eyes on him in I don't know the time."

"They're all here, Mr. Pate, and nothing's the matter with them, except the old Dominicker; that I had killed because he was old, and the young ones got to running him all over the yard, and he's now in the oven a-baking for dinner. The rest are all right enough, far as I know."

"Eh? What did you say?"

She repeated the words sufficiently loud.

"Why, you don't mean to tell me they've been a-crowin' these last few mornin's?"

“Regular.”

“Eh?”

“*Regular!*”

“You cert’n in your mind, Nancy?”

“Yes, SIR!” she screamed; “I’ve heard them every morning of the world, distinct.”

“My goodness! Then somethin’s ’s obleeged to be wrong about me som’er’s, like has been hinted, and some has gone to the lenkt to say it flat down in my very face, and I denied it, hopin’ they were mistakened. Ah, well, I suppose it ain’t give to any one person to be perfect and keep perfect always. But a onexpecteder and a pitifuller case I’d sildom wish to see any more in nobody.”

The old man’s carriage from that time underwent much change. His first efforts at resignation were entirely praiseworthy, even touching, he believed, notwithstanding the feeling that it would have been more just, at least more becoming all around, if, good man that he was, and known by everybody to be a good man, he could have been spared, in an old age so green and hearty, such a sorrowful letting down. As time went on, it pained and even began to anger him to suspect that others were not as considerate of him as he would have been of them in mutually reversed conditions. If he had tried ever so hard to keep silent, it would not have

been possible to do so, and it was some comfort to him that, although he could not hear, he could pour forth into other ears his sore complainings. Yet even this, from certain causes, as will appear presently, dwindled somewhat after a while.

“HINES'S” people called it.

This was a small country store situate on the public road at the corner of our grove. When a lad of seven or eight, with — sometimes, if my memory be not treacherous, without — leave of my parents, I went down to this place, especially on Saturdays, in order to see and listen to the men who repaired thither partly for business, mainly to tell and hear what news might be in the neighborhood. Mr. Pate seldom failed to be there on those days. I had grown to be somewhat of an acknowledged favorite with him; mainly, I suspect, because I used to listen respectfully to his talkings, while most of his acquaintances were beginning to avoid the garrulousness which increased with his years.

One day I felt complimented when he invited me to go with him to a bench under one of the great red-oaks a few rods from the store piazza.

“Come along with me, my son,” he said affectionately. “I want to talk jest betwixt me and you about things that may be it mayn’t do you

any harm to 'member when you git to be a old man like me. Come along."

When we were seated on our bench, he took a rather mournful, but entirely calm, survey of the amphitheatre above, and of the level roundabout, and thus began :

"Do you know, my boy, I ask you solemn without expectin' a answer—but do you know that I'd ruther be blind than deaf? I don't mean out and out clean stone blind, but about half-way blind, like I'm now deaf. You don't? Well, I would, and I'll tell you for why."

Then he threw down upon me a look perhaps little, if any, below the solemnly magisterial gaze which Plato on occasion of one of his most melancholy doubtings may be supposed to have bestowed upon his disciples in the grove of Academus, and thus began :

"Yes, sir; true as gospel. And it's because people, as a gen'l thing, is good to blind people, and they'll not only git out of their way, but they'll actuil go out of their own way to help 'em to find whare they're a-movin' to git to. And, sir, they'll even take holt of their hand, and be as proud as a jay-bird when they do it, and they'll lead 'em, same as a baby jest learnin' to walk, to their best, comfortablest cheer, a hustlin' out anybody else that's in it. And then they'll ask 'em all about their healths,

when nine times out o' ten they ain't a-keerin' any more about it than other people's. And they'll talk soft to 'em and help 'em to cut up their victuals, and beg 'em to keep on takin' some more when they positive know that they've already eat the greatest plenty, and has no earthly need of one single 'nother mouthful. And not only that, but they'll do a whole lot of things for 'em to that—well, jest betwixt me and you and this tree we're settin' under, I have positive knowed of some o' that sort that could jest see to git about, and a-makin' out they couldn't do that conven'ent, that the fact of the whole business were, they wasn't any manner of account in the beginnin', before they got so, and they wouldn't be if they got over it. And, sir, they were so proud of bein' waited on in that kind o' style, that they wouldn't give a bawbee nor a continental red cent to have their eyes put back cle'r, so they'd be expected to go back to work, and be treated like other people. Yes, sir; that's the way blind people is treated. But when you come to people that is deaf in their year,—that is, you mind, people that is half-and-half like me,—people has not only no respects of 'em, but they has nothin' but contemp', and sometimes, as I know by expe'unce, they despise 'em in their very sight. Now, as for me, I always were a man that like to hear what's

goin' on, and a-knowin' other people was the same, it's always been my rule to gether all I could, and let other people sheer in it, as well as the idees I have on matters and things in gen'l, and then to give 'em free my advices, whether they got the gumption to take it or not, which is their lookout, and not mine, you understand."

He paused briefly, as if in respectful review of a past so signally benignant, then continued:

"But sence I've got in the fix I'm in, in the hearin' of my year, people have got to dodgin' me, and runnin' away from me, same as if I had the eech or even the smallpok, whensomever I come where they are. Or if they set down to swap a few words with me, time we've got through with how our families is, and about the weather, they git up, and they shoot off, albe some of them do have the manners to give out that their business is a-callin' of 'em som'er's else, and they are obleeged to go an' 'tend to it. And all that after the life I've led, and the useful it's always been my aim to be, and to do accordin' as the good Lord let it lay in my power. Now don't sech as that look like a pity to this generation of people? Seem to me like it do."

He sniffed long and audibly, and did not seem to note the few assuring words which I could

employ in sympathy with his suffering from general ingratitude. Indeed, I was almost sure that he could not have heard them, because what I said was :

“But, Mr. Pate, everybody loves and respects you.”

“Yes, yes,” he said, with some impatience ; “that’s what they all tell me ; but I don’t want advices. I ain’t a man to need people’s advices. What I want is for people to talk to me and to listen to me. Don’t you understand ?”

“Yes, sir,” I answered quickly.

After a moment he said :

“But, my son, it’s things in my own family that hurts me the worst. If people outside think they can do without my opinion and without my advices in their business and their matters and things in gen’l, why, that’s their perfect right, and I’m not a denyin’ of it ; but when it come to my own folks, there’s where the shoe pinch. As to what my people has been to me, the good Lord know I can’t complain, nor I don’t. I’ve had two as good wives as the sun ever ris or sot on. My first one were before your day ; but people that’s old enough ’members what a high, splendid women she were ; and my second, well, everybody sees how if she’s low in heighth, she’s bunchy, and she make up for stren’t’h by bein’ active. As for

my childern, if I say it myself that maybe oughtn't, they've been raised to be as reason'ble good and respectable childern as the common run of anybody else's childern in this whole neighborhood of people, accordin' to — yes, I may say accordin' to the — to the society we live in at the present time, you — you understand — ahem."

"Oh, yes," I tried to interpolate; "everybody says that your children —"

"But," ignoring my attempt, he went on, "what hurts me to the very bone sometimes is the disrespects that's putt on me in my own family, the not expectedest of all. Why, sir, I used to be lively at home, and keen as a brier to make things interestin' about the house; and now it look like I ain't so mighty much more than our old Dominicker rooster, that the young ones got to runnin' over him, and stopped all his usefulness; and so they put him up in the coop, and they fattened him, and then they killed him, and they baked him, and 'tweren't he were so fat, and cooked so brown, stuffin' and all, and gravy accordin', I couldn't of teched him. And I actuil felt solemn when I were a-eatin' one o' his drumsticks, and a slice or two of his breast, and some pickin's on his side-bone; I tell you, I felt positive solemn to think what everything have to come to in the course o'

time, more or less ; that the poor old fellow used to wake me up every mornin' at the crack o' day with his crowin' ; and it's got to that I can't hear a single rooster on the place, and I hain't the words to tell how my feelin's inside o' me was hurted when I found it out."

He put his handkerchief momentarily to his eyes, as if to warn back any weak tear that might feel itself impelled to the front, and then continued :

"But the thing is, my son, that I'm a beginnin' to suspicion 'em o' dodgin' me in my own house, like they do everywhere else, and that it make 'em tired, and sometimes it even fret 'em, to have to talk to me. And then I git fretted too, after all I've been to 'em. And it's got so I try my level best to not want to know about things like I used to do. Yit, when I see them a-workin' o' their mouth in a way that make me certain in my mind somethin' interestin' is up, I can't help, to save my life — I can't help from wantin' to know what it's about. And then one of 'em comes and bawls it in my year, frecwent it's not worth talkin' about, and then I suspicion 'em of foolin' me by a-tellin' me the poorest, insignificantest part, and a-holdin' back the rest. Then, 'casionally the idee takes holt on me that they're a-talkin' about me, and a-sayin' they wish I weren't so troublesome, and all

that, and it sting me mighty nigh the same like anybody was to run a pin in me."

After another pause, turning his face all about, as if to be sure that none other were in hearing, with a look of grave apprehension, almost of alarm, in lower tones he said:

"And, sir, don't you know, sir, that the suspicionin' o' them in that kind o' style have got so it have begun to make me ruther deceitful myself? It jest skeers me to think about it. You mustn't let on I told you so. I was positive obleeged to tell somebody, it lay so heavy on my mind, and I tell it to you because you're always good, respectable to me, and you never dodges me, nor runs away from me when I'm a-talkin' to you. Fact, sir, sometimes when my years ain't quite as cloudy as common, special when the a'r is on my side, I can gether what they're sayin', and they don't know it. But I jest know I've got not to let on, to keep 'em from suspicionin' me of makin' out I'm worse off than what I actuil am. Now, ain't sech as that a pity for a man of my cha-rec-ter, that's if they is anything I ever did hate, it was deceitful, and special when I caught people a-tryin' to put it on *me*, and make a fool of *me*? I jest declare, I git so sorry for myself sometimes a-thinkin' about it, that I can but hope the thing will let up on me after a while, so I can git

back to the usefulness I had before I got in this fix."

At this juncture, one of the neighbors, who had just arrived, after alighting, and fastening his horse at one of the racks, approached, in order to pay his respects. Mr. Pate, after a look of incipient resentment toward the comer, turned to me, and in low, hurried tones said :

"There, now, my son, that'll do ; you can go now ; but *don't you let on what I told you.*"

To his injunction of silence regarding his confession I paid what respect was possible, limiting disclosure to my parents and a few other intimate acquaintances, with prudent admonitions that it should not go much further. After observations through many years among the aged, to say nothing of even more reliable sources, I seem to recall, what I was then too young to discern in my old friend's droll words, some real pathos, and if not some wisdom, a pathetic simulation of wisdom in thus essaying to defend himself against wrongs real and imaginary ; and so his case, feeling at this late day I may be held excusable, I now, for the first time, make public.

SHADOWY FOES

SHADOWY FOES

I

EVERYBODY thought so much of her that she was always called by her Christian name, which was Penninah, though commonly abbreviated to P'nniny. Old people and familiars said *P'nniny*, just so; others said *Miss* or *Missis* P'nniny, according to relations and circumstances. Many and many a time have I heard old people say that from the time she first grew up, in the more than one interesting relation into which she had been put by destiny, if anybody ever had a better neighbor, all they cared to ask would be what that neighbor's name was, and where he or she lived, as the case might be. Her reputation as a visitor of both well and sick in the day, as a sitter-up with the latter at night, as a layer-out of the dead, as a consoler of weeping survivors, as a thoughtful suggester about the paling in of graves, and the planting around them of shrubs and things, was of the very best. On occasions not so lugubrious — for instance, as a complimentary eater of good dinners at

other people's houses, and as a bountiful giver of them at her own — she was unexceptionable. Now that is as high as I can honestly state her standing in our neighborhood.

When I had grown old enough to begin to notice with interest things outside of my own domestic circle, she (whose dwelling was about a mile to the south of Hines's store) was living in calm enjoyment of her second widowhood. Young as I was, I could not but remark the happy geniality that was exuberant in all her walk and conversation. It was the more surprising to me, therefore, when I learned that during the period extending throughout her married life — or, as I might more justly say, throughout both her married lives — she had indulged in two hostilities which at times inflicted upon her own feelings pain intensely exasperating. Honest woman that she was, she shrank not from admitting frankly that neither of the persons who had become the objects of her repugnance had ever perpetrated — in all human probability had never meditated — injury of any sort upon her rights or feelings. That made no difference: the animosity was in her breast, and there it stayed during two joint lives.

As for these persons, both of her own sex, neither had so much as dreamed of hurting either her or anybody or anything belonging or

appertaining to her. Yet it was really stirring to note how this lady, in all respects so excellent, and indeed so happy during the greater part of the time, would occasionally pour forth abusive tirades, threatening, if they ever should perpetrate the atrocity she dreaded, what she would do in case she should be allowed to get at them.

The names of those enemies I cannot, any more than you can, call, inasmuch as they were never handed in to the clerk of the Court of Ordinary, wherein applications of such ladies, or of gentlemen in their behalf, according to the statute in such cases made and provided, were usually filed. Inasmuch as they had not lived up to the time when I began to know her unhurt by foes seen and unseen, she had survived apprehension of their assaults, and was then, as I said in the beginning, as good a neighbor as anybody ever had, or ought ever to wish to have.

At the period of her introduction in this brief tale, if she was a day over forty, she would have thanked nobody for saying so. Her full name, before time had wrought its changes upon it, was Penninah Daniel, the baptismal prenomen being derived from that of the fruitful wife of Elkanah the Ephrathite, with the careers of whom and whose family Bible-readers are more or less familiar.

Now the name Penninah, "as olde bookes

maken memorie," signifies a precious stone; and notwithstanding the infirmities herein told, it is to be questioned if very many times it had been bestowed more worthily than in this instance. Not as pretty as some, but well shaped, industrious, vivacious, one of two daughters of a father who owned a fair tract of land and a good bunch of negroes, she was bound to have beaus; and she had them. From fifteen to seventeen she ruminated over the several offers made to her, and then took that of Jeff Lockett; and everybody said it was a good match for both. What is not always the case in such ties, the longer she lived with Jeff, the deeper she fell in love with him. If any person wanted to please her specially, and add to her pride at the birth of any of her children, it was to say that the baby when first exposed to view, was Jeff's picture over and over again, from the incipient curl on the summit of his head to the crook of his little finger. Such she was when there began to arise an apparition that disturbed the otherwise uninterrupted felicity of her existence.

II

As for Jeff Lockett, he did not wilfully indulge in vanities of any sort. If his children were thought like him, who knew without any-

body's telling him that he was no paragon, well enough. If that idea pleased his wife, also well enough. He admitted having some of the hard-headedness of which his wife playfully accused him sometimes, and he accepted her exuberant devotion just as if he knew he deserved every bit of it. The hard-headedness before hinted at made itself most apparent when, after two of his facsimiles had been born in fast succession, demands were made upon him to promise what he would do, or rather what he would not do, in a certain contingency possible to occur. This contingency was his wife's death. With the thought of dying young, Jeff being young also, came that of another having him for a husband, and neither of them caring a bawbee for her grave, and seldom giving even a piece of memory to the one occupying it. This was more, she felt in her heart, than she ought to be called upon to bear after all her devotion to Jeff, and what she had gone through cheerfully on his account. Foreseeing that marriageable women of all descriptions, no sooner than the breath was out of her body, would be laying snares for Jeff, knowing what a glorious husband he was, she began to regard them as enemies to conquer whom the only chance lay in beginning the attack herself. Yet, like other and more noted diplomats, she began with discussion, and sought

to elicit from Jeff a promise that in the event of her death he would not take another wife. Now right there came in that infirmity of Jeff which it is hardly necessary for me to name for the third time. Jeff positively refused to make any such promise, saying that it was all nothing but foolishness. Whereupon Mrs. Penniny conceived for her possible successor a hostility of which no existing women would have liked to be the object.

Old Mr. Pate, who, from what he believed the best sort of motives, used to find out everything possible about everybody and everybody's business in the neighborhood, became much interested in this case. I remember hearing him say one day:

"I have knewed consider'ble wimming in my time, but nare one as vi'lent as P'nniny Lockett ag'in' the one she supposen Jeff might take for a wife in the ewent she drap off, of which she were as healthy a person as went, and look like they was positive no needcessity to be pesterin' her mind about sech a' onexpected thing for at least a many a year yit awhile. The thing is, she was took up with Jeff to that she couldn't b'ar the thought of him havin' of another wife; and it cut her to the very marrer of the bone, she say, because Jeff wouldn't make her any promise to the contrairey; and I have heerd her ac-

knowledge that the way she did hate that second wife o' Jeff were a sin, but which she couldn't help it because it were in her heart and were there to stay ; at which Jeff laugh, Jeff did."

One day Penniny fell sick, and grew worse and worse, so that after about a week all her friends, including the doctor, gave her up to die. Moved by solemn duty, a pious aunt informed her of her extreme danger, and suggested that, in view of the approaching change, she should make what preparation she regarded necessary.

Too weak to be greatly shocked by the announcement, she only sighed and whispered that on her mind were a few things she wished to say to Jeff, and in the hearing of all at her bedside. Jeff, poor fellow, was nigh distracted with grief ; yet he had strength to approach, lean his head, and listen to her dying words, which were an appeal for a promise to her, in the presence of all there, that he would never put a step-mother over her children. That scene Mr. Pate, better than I, can describe.

"I was there, and heerd it all, a-wantin' to see the last o' poor P'nniny, as I thought she were mighty nigh gone, and give my advices about things in gen'l. The thing took Jeff so suddent that he was speechless, exceptin' to cry louder and declare that the takin' of another

wife have never been on top o' his mind, and he begged P'nminy to please not to name sech a' idee to him any more. But P'nminy kep' at him, and Jeff kep' at her to spar' him the mis'ry; and that is every bit she could git out o' Jeff, till final she got mad, and she fetched a flirt, she did, and as she fetched it, she fa'rly *sung* out, 'Well, thank the good Lord, I ain't dead yit!' And she turned herself over, and she faced herself to the wall, and from that minute she begun to git better, and 'tweren't more'n two days before she could set up in bed, and wash her face, and comb her ha'r, and in a week's time she was goin' about the house and tendin' to her business same like before she taken down. Doctor Lewis said it were jes what she needed, to git mad and make a' effort; and he say if Jeff have had promised her as she wanted, she'd been a dead 'oman in less'n twenty-four hours. And so the very next year poor Jeff he took sick, and doctor's physic nor nothin' else could hender him a-goin' out for good. It seem mighty nigh killin' of P'nminy to see him go; but he never asked for no promise, and well he didn't, because everybody know what followed in jue time."

III

So that first enemy was forgiven freely, and not another word against her was ever heard to come out of Penniny's mouth, although in Mr. Pate's opinion not very many a cow with a crumpled horn ever looked more forlorn than she did now. Time and time again she declared that she never would get over it. Yet when, in the following year, Billy Gunnell's wife died, leaving two poor little motherless children, she couldn't keep, to save her life, from being sorry for them, and thankful they were too young to feel the full extent of their loss. Remembering how Billy had sympathized in her and her orphans' griefs, what time they were freshest and sorest, common gratitude drove her to feel sorry for Billy also. I need not say what was the final outcome of such mutualities. With Billy she fell in love, the same as with Jeff, and when the first Gunnell baby was born, that other woman had, it seemed, no other business to do but to rise, and cast her malignant shadow upon a path that otherwise would have been in renewed continuous sunshine.

"I jest can't help it," often she pleaded; "I love my children, both sets of 'em, so much, and I love Billy the same, that it makes me perfect miser'ble to think of another woman coming in

to hector over things in this house, and me in the ground, and not able even to turn over in my grave, much less get out and reg'late such things in general. Oh, you may laugh; but it's so. I actual hate that woman, sinful if it may be, and I acknowledge that I wouldn't make any strenious objections to the bad man getting possessions of her when her time comes, if not before. Everybody know I were the same in Jeff's lifetime, and Doctor Lewis said it were the thought of it kept me from dying that time I come so nigh a-doing of it. When Jeff died, that he was the very best husband any woman in this world ever did have — of course, excepting of Billy, that at present ocepy his place total unexpected — *but* at which then time, every heart I had in my breast was that broke that I had no more idees of getting married again than I had of splunging head foremost into the very bottom o' Rudisill's mill-pond, where the water is knew to be the deepest, solemn as such a thing would have been to people who knoweth not and cannot understandeth how they might be for their own selves in similar case. Why, if any man, be he the finest and richest man that ever walked on two legs, had he have daresn't to even name such a thing to me, if I couldn't have got him out the house no other way, I would have positive called up the hounds, sot

them on him, and sent him scooting back to his home, wheresomever it might be. That is me, or ruther I might say it *were* me, the day poor Jeff let loose his holt on me and the children, and, as old Brer Sanford expressed it, feeling and mod'rate and comfo'ting, was gethered to his fathers; and for months *on* months afterward, until a perfect awful event happened in the drapping off of poor, dear Sally Gunnell, and the leaving of me exposed to have feelings of entire different sort, they is no telling what might happened, that I was thankful Jeff never asked me for a promise of no sort, but said with his dying breath he had no doubts I'd try to do the best I knewed how.' And so, when I saw the orphan and awful condition poor Sally Gunnell left her little children, and when Billy began to pessecute and *pessecute* me to help take keer of 'em, some women might have stood it and helt out, but not me. But — and yit it is now different; a-supposing and a-acknowledging me have been wrong in the first instant. Because Billy have had two wives already, and me two husbands, which my own private opinion always have been, that's as many as the good Lord ever want any woman to have, that I have been good as I knewed how to Sally's children, and Billy the perfect same to Jeff's children; but I has not the confidence to believe likewise

of any other woman under the broad sun in the circumstances of the case, as it now stand, or would stand when I die. But yit, when I ask Billy to promise me, he will do nothing of the kind, but say it is all nonsense and foolishness ; and it put me on thorns, jest like it did before, against the woman that is to bang my and poor Sally's children about, and tromple over my and her grave. People needn't to talk to me ; I jest can't help being mad when I think about it, and that's a most of the time when I'm awake and not at my work or my victuals."

No ; Billy Gunnell would make no such promise, even at times when his wife lay sick. We shall see what he got by it.

IV

MR. PATE being more familiar with the facts of the case than I am, I shall let him talk again.

"If P'nniny Gunnell weren't one of 'em, I don't know any as was. Ev'rybody 'member how bad she hated that unfort'nate female she suspicioned Jeff o' marryin' in ewent she went first, and then how her bristles riz the same ag'in' Billy's third wife. It did seem to me like them wimming, if nothing but sperrits though they be, and not even that, but they actual kep' her

alive in both them hard spells she had endurin' first Jeff and then Billy's time. For she were always a resky person about expogin' herself to sickness, wisitin' everybody in the neighborhood that had it, special' poor people, helpin' about everything, down to the very last in the graveyard, and havin' nothin' ag'in' anybody in the wide world exceptin' them aforesaid females. And now she were widder ag'in, and been widder long enough for another weddin', 'tweren't she were that oppoged to the very idee of sech a thing, that she declar' she mean to dewote her time to the raisin' o' her children and Sally Gunnell's children the best she know how, with the good Lord's he'p, and doin' what little good it lay in her power to do outside among her neighbors, as ev'ybody acknowledge in that they ain't her ekal. It look strange to me how come a ruther smallish female have buried two big, strong, young husbands, and to all appearance because on her dyin' beds they wouldn't promise her like she wanted, and jedgment come on 'em, both a-layin' silent side by side there the back o' the gyarden where she planted 'em. And I have give' my advices to Harry Brister and Sammy Pounds, that both of them val'able young men been layin' for her ever sence not so very long arfter Billy Gunnell went, and was now open and aboveboard a-tryin' to over-persuade her, as both

of 'em well might, considerin' what a fine ketch she were, and picked up powerful sence she been a widder, like most of 'em tries to do, and does; that my advices to them boys was, the first *I* should lay before P'nniny, if it was me, I should promise P'nniny, at the very offstart, that in the ewent of her a-goin' before me I should never even think about takin' of another companion. And then, if the time come a'gin and onexpected, to leave it to the good Lord to git me out o' standin' up to sech a foolish promise. As they both done it, but no use. Oh! she were one of 'em, Penninah were."

"No; not Harry Brister, or Sammy Pounds, or any other one of I could not say how many other widowers and bachelors that lay siege to her gates, could ever take them. To all offers, backed by whatever promises and oaths, she smiled calmly, answering:

"No: the sheer I've had of marrying is as much as any one woman ought reasonable to wish for in a vale where, as the Scriptur' say, there's so many tears. I have had a very much happiness with two husbands as good, to my opinions, as any that went; and I do not think I ought to take the resk another and a third time, and have my feelings all worked up in anxiety about stepmothers to my children and Sally Gunnell's the same, that as for them I've

tried to do a good part. I acknowledge such anxiety was vain and foolish, as both my husbands frequent said, that they both went before, and I have tended both their graves as the good Lord give me strength and light. As for them two women that I hated with every bit of heart was in me, a-notwithstanding they was nothing but idle tales in my own mind, I hope the good Lord will not seemeth him meet to let 'em rise up in judgment against me not expected; but my mind is made up final that never—no, never—will I take the resk of another of 'em."

THEIR COUSIN LETHY

THEIR COUSIN LETHY

It seemed to me, child as I was, rather pitiful that, as Mr. Pate grew harder of hearing, and older, people, although never meaning to be offensive or impolite, kept themselves as much apart from his society as was possible to respectful friendly relations. This was on account of his increased garrulousness, and his frequent complainings of the little attention paid to his words, sometimes narrative, as often admonitory. A harmless egotist, honestly believing himself to be a very charitable and therefore a very useful gossip, his habit was, before his deafness came on, to find out, as a matter of simple neighborly duty, every possible thing about current neighborhood existence, and then, without ever dreaming of charging anything for it, to offer his counsel for its disposal or utilization. This counsel some might, others might not, accept. He was a man too well poised to be fretted by neglect of taking help gratuitously extended by one to whom so much wisdom had been imparted by Heaven, being accustomed at all times to

reflect in entire calmness that his mission was only the giving of counsel, not the enforcing its adoption. The intimacy between him and me, notwithstanding the difference of more than threescore years in our ages, became only the closer as adult listeners who avoided his society increased in numbers. Somehow I became much interested in what he had to say, especially regarding things happening before my day. Not without some spirit of romance in his being, he told me several of his recollections in that line which sometimes I rather like to recall. These fond recurrings of old men to their young times seem to me of the dearest among the Almighty's tendernesses to second childhood in human existence.

One afternoon, when he and I had become the only sitters on one of the benches hard by the store, he said :

“ Did I ever tell you about the run of Ephom Garrett and 'Lige Strouder for their cousin Lethy ? ”

Indeed I had heard the story more than once ; but willing for him to enjoy another telling, I looked inquiringly.

To bring the story within reasonable limits, I must abbreviate within my own some of my narrator's many words.

The Garretts lived a mile from one end of the

village, and the Strouders about equidistant from the other. The Criddles occupied a nice two-story house in the middle, near the store of Bland & Jones. Nearly opposite, on the other side of the street, in a somewhat nicer two-story, dwelt the Robys, with whom boarded Mrs. Roby's brother, Curry Lightner. Mrs. Criddle was sister to Mr. Garrett, and Mr. Criddle brother to Mrs. Strouder. That is, they used to be before the heads of the three families had died. This of course made Ephraim Garrett and Elijah Strouder, although of no kin to each other, cousins to Lethy Criddle, of whom some people, admitting that this was saying a great deal, maintained that she was the head of all the pretty girls that went to Mr. Hodge's school. Fond of both of these cousins, who were some five years older than she, Lethy often tried to reconcile their differences, which, beginning early, continued late. And well she might, because but for her those boys might have been as friendly with each other as any other couple not similarly exposed to estrangement.

"The de-ficulty was," as briefly put by Mr. Pate, "they was two of them, and they weren't but one of Lethy, which my expe'unce is that always make a deff'ence in sech a case."

Truth is, both these cousins had been dead in love with Lethy from the time when she was

thirteen and began to notice outward things, and each regarded the other with the apprehension natural to the double relationship.

“Yes, sir,” said Mr. Pate; “them boys took to runnin’ ag’in’ one another from time Lethy’s ma let her drap her pant’lets, and begin to go to parties and fishin’s, and them kind of things. It hurt one of ’em when tother turned him down at whatsoever they went at. They wasn’t so fer from bein’ about on a pair in gener’l. They said at their school that ’Lige had considible the advantage in readin’, but Ephe kept above him in the spellin’ class. They was about ekal in grammar, and if ’Lige was some better in jography, Ephe topped him in figgers. So it were in their playin’. ’Lige in gener’l beat Ephe a-runnin’, but twicet out of three times Ephe could lay ’Lige’s back on the ground in a wrastle.”

Thus, as my friend in extended detail went on to relate, the rivalry continued on every field of joint endeavor until all were grown up, and settled down to business; for in those times girls, if in different ways, did work for the family, whether it was needed or not. The rivals, full of health and activity, equally unobjectionable as to looks and habits, not the difference of an inch in height or of half a dozen pounds in weight, Ephraim a shade lighter and

Elijah a shade browner than Lethy, continued to besiege each in the way he was advised and believed was most promising; and Lethy, sweet, good, thoughtful girl that she was, while never showing signs of preference for either, often exhorted them to moderate, if they could not altogether suppress, their mutual hostility.

"You mind, my son," Mr. Pate lingered to remark in sage parenthesis, "when a girl is pootty and sweet as any pink, and she knows it, as Lethy Criddle were obleeged to know the above, they can be as cool, or at least they know how to make believe they are cool the same 'as a curcumber, when them that want 'em may be hot as a horseshoe jest out of the fire. And fact is, the red hotter them gits, the cooler they can show theirself. That's one o' the advantages the good Lord have give' to females, and a fellow have to study and pick up exp'unce in sech things to find out how to git round 'em. Oh, I tell you now, and other people will tell you, that Joe Pate hain't been livin' this long in the world without getherin' a many a useful itom of information about wimmin' single and married, a-includin' of widders, because a man, even if he is married, he never know when sech infimation mayn't come in handy."

The counsellor, and sometimes by special re-

quest the go-between, of these lads and their cousin was Curry Lightner. He was a tall, brownish, bushy-haired person, who, although as far gone in years as twenty-nine without ever being even engaged, was one of those cool, level-headed bachelors not at all common, and was often heard to say that people might name him any name to suit themselves, but that he should not make any movement toward getting married until he could be made to believe, in some one particular case, that he would do better than by staying single. On the income of his property, which was somewhat more than that of any of the other three, he lived at ease, yet without extravagance. He dressed neatly, but with occasional negligence, which some said was put on for the purpose of showing (but all for policy's sake) his independence of general female opinion. He patiently let himself be consulted by ardent young men and youths in their loves, and, although never undertaking to become a zealous partisan, freely gave advice out of his long, apparently unselfish contemplation of such matters, and his stock of interesting words, which seemed without limit. In the case of Ephraim and Elijah, he said to each distinctly that while he was willing to advise freely, it must not be expected of him to take an active part on the side of either, but that

they must fight the thing out themselves on their several lines.

“No, Ephe; no, 'Lige,” alternately in multitudinous concludings; “you see what I can do for you. My advices is as free as water a-me-and'ring down its own stream for others to partake besides itself; but the making or the breaking in those aforesaid things is not to my hand to perp'trate, but is for them that is willing to make enemies for what is not their look-out nor their own particular business. No; come to me when your mind is egzited either by doubts or uncertainties, and I'll talk to you as free as I would with my own parrents if they wasn't both of 'em dead.”

Hardly satisfactory as were such interviews to the lads, yet each was consoled by assurance felt that the confidant would at least never bestir himself in support of his rival. This assurance was well founded, for in none of Lightner's visits to the Criddles', which were frequent, did he ever speak a word implying special preference in his regard for either, although very many kindly of both.

Chatty and vivacious as Lethy was generally, yet much of her talk when with her cousins separately was not very interesting, because it ran so much in praise of the absent. One day, when she and Elijah were alone together, noting

that her words in praise of Ephraim, if not entirely lost upon the listener, were far from the sort he would have preferred to hear, after talking until it was becoming plainly painful to him, she said :

“Cousin 'Ligy, what is the reason you and Cousin Ephe don't seem to like each other like you ought? Seems strange, nice young men like you are, and both my own dear cousins at that. Now there's Mr. Curry Lightner. He never comes here that he don't have something kind and pleasant to say about you both ; while you and Cousin Ephe—I do wish you and he could be more friendly, indeed I do.”

“Has Ephe Garrett been running me down to you, Lethy?”

“There it is! No, he has not, as you ought to know well enough I wouldn't let him do if he was to want. But neither has he been running you up, as I suppose you would call it, no more than you've ever been running him up to me. It isn't right, and hurts ma's feelings, not to say anything of mine, that I don't suppose, because it don't look like, either one of you cares anything about *them*.”

These words, intended so to be, were tremulous and touching.

“My goodness, Lethy! Care about your feelings? *Me?* Why, Aunt Patsy ought to know,

and you can't help from knowing, that Ephe Garrett don't — that, no, not to save his life, could Ephe Garrett — think half as much of you as I do."

"Why couldn't he?" she asked, restored to calmness and coolness.

"Because it ain't in him, Lethy, and never was in him, and never could git in him. He hain't the heart capacity to hold what's in me; nor he hain't the breast, nor — nor — yes, I'll say it open — he hain't it not in one single one of his whole blessed inside of nervous fabrication, to leave love and affection entirely out of the case, whom to compare with me and mine in the presence of you."

"Whee-oo! Cousin Ephe, according to all that, must be very lacking somewhere."

"For that and them onnly, Lethy; for that and them onnly is my meaning of the above. As to Ephe Garrett, what I should say about Ephe Garrett, if I was called on to express my opinion of Ephe Garrett, it would be that in some points of view of a case not of the present sitooation, Ephe Garrett is right much of a man; but that in the present sitooation it is me that know what you to be in and through yourself, and to 'preciate and vally to the accordin'. It is me that have the judgment of your perfection and all your walk and conversation and

would fain believe, if you could only think as I do, that happiness to both of us would be commensurate. And it not onnly is hard, but to me, in my present egzitement, it look pitiful, when I am using the most perspective words I know how, and trying to put my very best foot foremost, you're there a-laughing at me, and I have no doubts in my mind but what it's because Ephe Garrett has been telling you something mean and ridiculous about me."

When her laughing fit was over, she answered :

"It isn't so, Cousin 'Ligy; not a bit of it. When Cousin Ephe is here he talks mostly with ma; but neither ma nor I have ever heard him say one single word against your character in any way. It's all in your imagination."

Yet he could not entirely believe her, and he went away pondering how he might get even with Ephe.

After waiting quite a time for Mr. Pate to get thus far in his narrative, I let him proceed for some distance in his own way.

"Now Ephe Garrett's huntin' were deff'ent from 'Lige, that 'Lige went at Lethy straight out mad, like Lethy had good rights to be hisn and nobody else, and that amejent, which ain't the thing with young, unexpe'unced girls, howsomever it may be with widders, that I have

had expe'unce of both. And my expe'unce of widders is, when they has drapped the takin' on for their husband that's dead and goned and showed hissself to be no more use to them, and arfter they has made up their mind to try it ag'in, the thing can be settled without any great to-do in the multiplyin' o' words. Why, there's my wife, that she's my second, and nobody ever had a better, exceptin' of my first wife, jest as good, that she, a-meanin' of my wife for the time a-bein', ware the widder Tidy. I ain't sayin' it's so, but the drappin' off of Johnny Tidy not long before my first wife went to her mansions in the sky seemed a'most like the good Lord had a' eye on my woeful conditions, knowin' what a friend to him I had always tried to be. Yit when the case were so be, and come around so natchel and conven'ent like, that there were our two plantations a-j'inin', me a widower and Mrs. Tidy a widder, both young enough and, you may say, strong and warlike, that one night I thought it all over, and next mornin' I rid over there, and when I putt the case before her (for she were always a quick-mind' person for a female), she see through it plain as me, and before I left that house we app'inted the day. But you see, my son, that's widders. With young girls it's deff'ent. A man have to flarter them up powerful when

they're pink and scrimptious like Lethy Criddle, and that's jest where Ephe knowed 'Lige had the 'vantage of him in the words and langwidges that somehow Ephe never could come up with like 'Lige, and what he did know of 'em, his bashful egzitement made him forgit 'em in Lethy's company tell it were too late. But with old people Ephe Garrett could express hissself to perfect satisfaction. And so Ephe made set, Ephe did, at Lethy's ma, because he done already heard the sayin' that a good way to ketch a calf silent and easy were to fling a nubbin to the cow."

One day Ephe took in to Mrs. Criddle a basket of nice country things, — eggs, butter, and I couldn't say what all, — and after usual salutations, giving and receiving of thanks, with no mention of Lethy, who had stepped over to a neighbor, he said:

"I don't know, Aunt Patsy, that you know that pa in his lifetime thought more of you than are sister or brother in the family, and it seems like the same have come down to me sense he's dead and gone."

Then with his left hand he gently rubbed his right jaw.

"It's very nice in you to say so, Ephra'm," answered his aunt. "It was jest last night Lethy and I were talking about how good you

and 'Ligy Strouder was to remember us, that only yisterday he brought her a whole lot of roses and bubbly blossoms."

Ephe took down his hand, laid it upon his knee, and had the looks of one who felt suddenly somewhat sick. Rallying, he said with words beginning in melancholy :

"Yes; I brought *my* present to you, though of course I expected Cousin Lethy to have her part — that is, without she rather have nothing to do with anything belongin' to me."

"Come now, Ephra'm; Lethy thinks jest as much of you as she do of 'Ligy — that is, to my opinion she do; and it seem a pity that you and him can't be friendlier with one another, that it look like the poor child is sometimes distressed in her mind at you and him a-growlin'."

"Aunt Patsy," he painfully remonstrated, "it ain't me; it is not me that is a-growlin' at 'Lige Strouder. It's 'Lige Strouder a-growlin' at me; and not only that, but a-barkin' at me to boot. Then you know that he don't think nigh as much of Lethy as I do. As for me, in this case, Aunt Patsy, I take in the view not only Lethy, but I take in you. Which I have yit to learn 'Lige Strouder do, with all his high-syllable words, which he have got out of the dictionary with Curry Lightner to help him, and which I've got too much work to do to investigate. But 'Lige

Strouder can't deny that in the spellin'-class at Mr. Hodge's school he were a heap nigher the foot than I were to the head. 'Lige Strouder have been studyin' fine language and things, even o' nights, to find words to turn me down in Lethy's affection, when he know in his conscience I think a thousand million times more of her than he do, even if I can't p'inted find the words, when me and her is together by ourselves, to lay myself open before her. It's all because I love her to that distraction the words fail me. And so the best I can do is to putt my case before my own blessed aunt that I've learnt to love more than are aunt I've got in all this sorrowful world, when it look like a pity a young man with the affections I have can't git the peace on his mind he honest think he deserve."

Tears as honest as the very longest day of the year touched the aunt's heart. One was in her own eye when she said :

"Ephra'm, my son, I can onnly say that if the deciding of this case was left to me, you are obleeged to be awares how they would go. For blood is blood, and kin is kin, leavin' out that water is water, and can't be anything beyant water. I loved your pa the same he loved me, and even if it be Mr. Criddle were fond of 'Lijah's ma, yit blood is blood, which I can't but say

with that basket a-setting there before my very eyes. But I tell you now, after them feeble remarks, it's a subject that Lethy have took the bit in her own mouth, and is a-goin' to decide for her own self."

Ephraim thanked his aunt, and went away hopeful that what influence she could exert would preponderate in his favor.

At night when the mother reported this interview, said Lethy:

"That's all right, ma, — that is, it's as nigh right as Cousin Ephe knows how to put it. It would be just as well, though, if Cousin Ephe came at me instead of you, and if Cousin 'Lige came at me different and with fewer of his big words, which he ought to know that I know that he don't know all the meanings of 'em. We'll see about it before very long. No use hurrying. What you say about kin being kin, and blood blood, is all right in its place. I'm sleepy myself, I am."

Shortly after the last-mentioned visits, the youths resorted alternately to their friend and counsellor.

"'Lige," said Mr. Lightner, "you have the advantage of Ephe in the quantities of your words, and the beautifulness of their significations and sounds; for my experience with women is, they rather love language and music, though

not a musician myself, strictly speaking, and have not yet used my best language on them, at least to any solemn extent. Them words 'notwithstanding' and 'nevertheless' which you tell me you flung out with Lethy, keerless, like you was used to them, will do you no harm. So the word 'commensurate,' although it might have been just as well to say what it all was commensurate with — say the universal world, or some other large thing. Yit I've no doubt she understood your meanings. If I was exact in your place, I should go on with my circulations, and should keep a dictionary where I could turn to it handy. A dictionary, if it mayn't be as interesting to some people like a love and warlike book, yit it has its use in matters of your kind. For you may say what you please about women, but it's principal language that taken their eye — of course I mean if looks, and property, and other advantages is satisfact'ry."

"Ephe," in his turn, "in my view of this terraqu'ous life, as I have seen named somewhere in my reading, the mind of one female freckwent hangs on the mind of another female, and her mind, — that is, the other female's mind, — to use a ruther low expression, a fellow have to untwine it gradual tell he can git himself included along with the girl of his desire. The

advantage you have over 'Lige in this case which it is plain to see, lays in Mrs. Criddle being your blood and not 'Lige's; and if it was me, I should put it forwards for all it is worth. I should keep on telling my Aunt Patsy how hard my own pa loved her; and as for baskets and buckets, and those kind of things, I should just hang around and actual pessecute her on them lines. Of course I can't interfere active between you and 'Lige, being both of you my friends, civil and political. It is for you and 'Lige to work the thing out for your own selves accordin' to the lamp by which both your feet is guided, like Patrick Henry said at the Declaration of Independence."

Indefinite and not quite intelligible as such counsels were, the rivals felt, though in some darkness, the need of holding to them.

Young as I was, I did not feel very, very tired as the old man fondly dwelt in elongated detail. The lengthening shadows of the trees warned him to advance to the end. Casting his eye momentarily at the fast-declining sun, he said:

"Well, there's a heap more of up and downs; but I reckon I as well finish up, and tell how the contendin' parties run the thing to a head. Rudisill have drawed off his mill-pond. At sech times whole lots o' people gethered there to

ketch fish with seines and nets, and one thing and another. Now Ephe Garrett, when oncet he were too rapid in the shettin' of his seine that was jes jammed with suckers and cat and red-bellies, she were split ag'in' a rock, and he skint his knee, and sprained his ankle, and he have to lay at home for a whole munt. And in the time news got out that Ephe Garrett have the rheumatiz, which have come down to him on his mother's side of the house. Nobody knowed who started it, but Ephe sispicioned 'Lige Strouder, and he declared he'd git even with 'Lige. So one day he went in town, and he hopped about on his cretch all over town, a-denyin' o' the words, and a-addin' that 'Lige Strouder's people have had the consum'tion on his father's side, a-includin' of a' old aunt that had a cough that lasted sixty year and better, and she tired out two whole gination o' people before she give out; that of course sech a disease, when it oncet got in a family o' people, it stayed there to the very last prosterity of 'em. Well, sir, when things got to that solemn p'int, somethin' have got to be done. And so Ephe sent word to 'Lige, and 'Lige sent word to Ephe, that soon as Ephe could fling away his cretch they was to meet at Bland's store and settle it. Now sech as that skeared Mrs. Criddle to that she begged Lethy to decide in

her mind before the battle come round, and Lethy declared she meant to. And so one mornin' Lethy putt on her very best frock and things, and her ma didn't say anything because she knowed night before what was up, and she looked solemn, but she said she were riconciled. Bimeby here come ridin' in town the old man Sanford that he was the parscher of their church, and he lit at the Robys', and were met at the gate by Curry Lightner, and them two and Mrs. Roby, Curry's sister, went straight across to the Criddles', and in less'n a half a' hour Lethy and Curry was j'ined in the banes, and then they lit in the Roby gig, and was off on a tower clean as fer as A'gusty, where they stayed one whole solid week."

"And what," I asked, "did the other young men do?"

"Do? why, they was both in the sitooation of the feller the calf runned over. They was both of 'em speechless, and had nothin' to do nor say. When their langwidges come back to 'em, Ephe said that as his cousin Lethy wouldn't take him, he were thankful she did not take 'Lige; and 'Lige said the same about Ephe. And when Curry Lightner got back, and call 'em 'Cousin Ephe' and 'Cousin 'Lige' kind and affectionate, and declare he have not putt hisself in his best langwidge before Lethy tell he see

they has run the lenkt of ther rope, they forgive him. And 'tweren't a year before Ephe married 'Lige's sister, and 'Lige married Ephe's sister; and then the whole lot of 'em got jest overwhelmed with one 'nother together in good feelin's all around."

OLD LADY LAZENBERRY

OLD LADY LAZENBERRY

As Mr. Pate advanced in age it seemed to console him much that, though interested listeners to his chattings gradually diminished in numbers on account of his deafness and growing garrulousness, I remained steadfastly loyal. One Saturday afternoon, sure that, as usual, he would be at the store, I went there. After all except myself, with one and another excuse, had gone away from him, knowing that he expected me to ask him for another story, I did so.

“Another story, eh? Ain’t you afeard you’ll git sp’ilt, havin’ a man o’ expe’unce and obserwation talkin’ to thes you by your lone self? No; no danger. Pity but what some grown people would follow the egzample of not a-interruptin’ ner runnin’ away from convisation which is meant for their good, and their good only, if they had the jedgment to see it. Well, what sort o’ story you want — Injun story, fightin’ story, or what?”

I answered that, if all the same to him, I preferred one with a good deal of love and courting

strung along, and some marrying toward the end.

“Thes listen to that! This here boy! And him eight year old last Chuesday! Fer I were at the house and I heerd his ma say it were his birthday. And I had to run my hand in my pocket and jerk out a thrip for him. And his ma hizitated about him takin’ of it; but she give in when she see my feelin’s would be hurted, and I conwinned her that a thrip give by a neighbor at sech a time weren’t big enough money to make a fool o’ nobody nowadays. Yes, he were eight year old a Chuesday, this here boy, and he want to hear about courtin’ and marryin’. Yit a body is obleeged to acknowledge that it’s in the blood o’ people, old or young. Courtin’ and marryin’ has been goin’ on ever sence Adam and Eve in the gyarden, and down till yit it’s the interestinest occeparation people can foller and hear tell about. I have putt my mind a right smart on the subject, and it have arriv’ to the settlin’ of it that the good Lord made ’em so in the offstart, fer to make ’em have and keep up their respect of a inst’ootion he see it were the best he could do fer thes sich a set. For my expe’unce of the good Lord have been and is that he know his own business better than anybody can tell him; that I have said so to warous people many and many a time, some

of 'em heedin' my word, and some not, as the case might be, a'cordin' to the gumption that deffer'nt people has, more or less. And — but this here boy want a story, he do."

For a moment or so he seemed dropped into reminiscent mood ; then, looking down upon me, he said :

"I ruther think I'll make a few remarks to-day on the old lady Lazenberry."

He smiled with benevolent compassion, moving his head slowly up and down, and proceeded :

"My expe'unce of old people — that is, what you might call oldish people — it is that when courtin' once take a start with 'em, it is rapider and it is p'inteder than young people, and it's because, a-knowin' what little sunshine they got left, they see the importance o' getherin' in what hay they see a-layin' round. Now the old lady Lazenberry she never liked the name herself, but they called her that to sip'rate her from her daughter-in-law.

"The family lived on t'other side the Ogeechee, not fur from Long Creek meetin'-house, where she were a member in good standin' from the time she j'ined, a girl, till now, when she have outlived two husbands, and active and spry as the youngest widder a-goin'. Her first husband were 'Lihu Lazenberry, and after he died leavin' her with three children, his brother Isaac,

a-feelin' hisself adequate to the above, stepped in and extenduated the family two better. Then *he* died, thes like everybody do when their time come. And when, some time atterwards, she begun to streak her black with red ribbins and things, people that thought she were goin' to give up to numerous affliction acknowledged they were mistakened in their mind. She were always one o' that kind o' wimming that, when they know they've got a better head on 'em than them around 'em, would go 'long and do what they wanted. Both her husbands knewed that, and was proud of her; for she were a elegant manager, which they weren't, and have got a right nice property together.

"Now, unfort'nately there were another female in the family that had ambition for the same, and that were Sally Ann, Billy Lazenberry's wife. But there's a deff'unce betwixt wimming that have a head and know it, and them that think they have got a head and hain't, and that were the case with Sally Ann. Billy ner none the other children, married or not, never thought o' sich a thing as tryin' to hector over their ma. But Sally Ann, knowin' that Billy bein' a good-hearted fellow, and wouldn't quail, she severial times ondertook to tell her ma-in-law she ought to do this and she oughn't to do that, and the old lady, fer Billy's sake, only thes

smiled, and went on about her business same as ef Sally Ann hadn't opened her mouth. You onderstand, she see Sally Ann never have nigh the head she have herself, and 'tweren't worth while to bother with her 'ithout the time come to use her to help fetch about anything she have made up her mind she want. And, shore enough, it did along o' them red ribbins and things I told you about. Sally Ann ought to have knew, like everybody else did, that the old lady weren't goin' to stay a widder providin' she could suit herself; for she weren't but forty-nine year old, and she were as perfect healthy and active as Sally Ann, every bit and grain, and as fer looks, she helt her own remarkable. She were never at no time what people called a great beauty, but she full made up by cha-recter and industr'ous and good managy, and special the good head she always carried about with her."

Despite what then seemed to me the very far advanced age of the lady thus for the third time indulging herself in romantic speculations, my old friend's numerous words were more interesting to me than I could hope to make them to others by rehearsal. I must narrate in brief, therefore, some facts told by him in much fond detail.

For reasons sufficient in her own mind, Mrs. Billy Lazenberry decided that her mother-in-law

should not marry again if she could hinder it. Knowing this, the elder, on her part, decided to use her daughter-in-law in furtherance of her intentions general and special.

When the widow had put on what Mr. Pate styled her "red ribbins and things," marrying gentlemen began to surmise that, whatever else might be the result, she would not take offence at approaches in ways of gentlemen that were not improperly urgent, and with words choicely persuasive. Among these was Mr. James Boze, a bachelor whom young people, for years, had been calling Uncle Jeems. Although a gentleman of some firmness of character and a reasonably good business man, he was slow in action, and modest to a degree that made him a favorite listener with those who much preferred their own to the conversation of others. He professed to be a lover of what he called "the seck," even acknowledging an intensity of feeling occasionally, when in the presence of one specially attractive, that produced titillation in his nostrils leading to violent sneezing when he had no more sign of a cold than the most clear-headed among my readers at this minute. Embarrassment, soon degenerating into inanity, had heretofore kept him from making known the state of his feelings to any particular lady. Now, being about the age of the widow Lazenberry, or perhaps a year

or so older, he was generally believed to be one who might be counted out when marriage was the theme of conversation among the neighbors. A rather small man in the beginning, latterly he had seemed to age and dwindle rather fast for one of his years. He lived close, closer in the lapse of time and the fading away of romantic ideas and hopes. With both the late Lazenberrys he had been a good friend, and many a time at the Lazenberry table had he been joked with by the last for continuing to be an old bachelor. Repelling such a charge as well as he could, he thanked Mrs. Lazenberry, and always remembered her for coming to his support on such occasions by maintaining that the only reason why he had not married was that his time hadn't come.

Now there may or there may not have been something peculiar in a look which Mr. Boze received from Mrs. Lazenberry on that Sunday at Long Creek meeting-house when she appeared first in colors. He indulged a small hope that there was; but he was not a man to presume upon such a thing. Yet there was noticed somewhat, if only a trifle, of brightening in his looks and dress, and a slight propensity to sneeze whenever the lady's name was mentioned in his hearing. In this simple society there were almost no secrets. If there had been, Mrs. Billy

Lazenberry would have been apt to make early acquaintance with one as interesting as this. As it was, her mother-in-law, far from indulging any motive of concealment, for reasons good and sufficient wished her to have knowledge of everything existing, and suspicion as far as possible beyond it. Mrs. Billy had laughingly been having a good deal to say about, as she expressed it, "old uncle Jeems Boze a-primping hisself here lately." Something pointed seemed needful for the occasion; so one day, when Billy was at his mother's, she said to him, "Billy, Sally Ann have been a-ridiculin' of Jeems Boze right smart, and if you could git her to stop it, possible it might be jest as well as not."

"Law, ma, I can't no more stop Sally Ann from sech as that than I can shet up all out o' doors. You know that, ma."

"Yes, I know, my son. Pity but what you could. Sally Ann, exceptin' of ruther too much tongue, is a good woman and a excellent wife. Maybe if you'll try it again you'll have better luck. Because you know Jeems Boze is not a for'ard person, and sech as that might hurt his feelin's and discourage him, which nobody ought to want to make enemies."

Billy promised to undertake the task.

"Now, my boy," here said Mr. Pate in parenthesis, "there were where the old lady showed

the head she had over Sally Ann. She knewed that when Billy begun on Sally Ann, it would turn her tongue perfect loose on Jeems Boze, and that's what she wanted done. And then she want to fling out to Billy in an affectionate, motherly way, so to prepar' his mind for what might be comin' onexpected-like."

As was foreseen, Mrs. Billy, after report of the conversation, excited by this new view of the case, became more intent than before upon repressing Mr. Boze. She went about picking up all there was to be had against him, adding freely other things that in her opinion would be far more discreditable if they could only be found out. Mr. Boze,—most harmless and peace-loving of mankind, never having been in a quarrel of any sort in all his life, and timid, especially with regard to women,—looking upon all this as a warning, decided that it was most prudent for him to stop right where he was, get back amain into his old clothes, shave himself as before but once a week, and that only in spots, indifferent as to the number of gashes from an unstropped razor, and give it out that his health was bad, and he had no expectation or wish to live much longer. It is curious, when a man comes to be afraid of a woman, how intensely afraid he *can* get. At the bare mention of Mrs. Sally Ann Lazenberry's name

Mr. Boze's countenance became utterly woe-begone, his small frame shrank yet smaller, and he trembled sensibly without, and more so within. It was actually pitiful how this humble, good man wilted before the blasts of Mrs. Sally Ann Lazenberry. When the widow had noted as much as was satisfactory of all this, she exclaimed :

"Aha!" and then added to herself, "Sally Ann is a conven'enter thing to have about sech a matter than a body might even want."

The afternoon was far worn before the conclusion of this story. I often recall my old friend's interest, greater, evidently, because of the ripe ages of the lovers. Passing over his very many words in narrating the subsequent doings of the parties interested, I subjoin some remarks of the one most prompt and active in conducting them to a happy end.

One day, a fortnight or so after an event the excitement of which began to subside the sooner, perhaps, for being the third of its kind, this person, in answer to a neighbor's congratulations, among very many others, said the following words :

"I thanky, Mrs. Ivy. The longer a body live in this world, it seem like the bigger their expe'unce is bound to be. When I was a girl, of course, like other girls, I looked forrards, and

when I got married, I done it accordin' to the Lord's app'intment, which I believe in the same in such cases as I believe in you a-settin' there. Well, 'Lihu Lazenberry he was a good husband, like he promised, but he died, leaving me a widder with three children. And after a while Isaac Lazenberry he overpersuaded me, not expected, and in the course of time Isaac Lazenberry went, and there I were again, with two more orphans. Now the 'Postle Paul, you know yourself, Mrs. Ivy, he writ that when a female person have lost her companion, it is perfect lawful for her to have another; and it seem like to me the 'Postle Paul give his advices freer to widders than young girls, being appearant rather doubtful sometimes about young girls, but p'inted that widders better had. Hadn't been so, I'd 'a' never took Isaac Lazenberry, and when Isaac Lazenberry went, it wouldn't been worth no man person's while to even name sech a subject to me, which I has no doubt, Mrs. Ivy, you were the same when Mr. Ivy come at you after your first husband died, a not doubtin' but what the 'Postle Paul knowed what he was a-talkin' about. Now, fact o' the business is, idees of the kind, after Isaac Lazenberry went, might of kept longer out of my mind hadn't been for Sally Ann, that everybody know the fun'ril of Isaac Lazenberry weren't so very fur over when

Sally Ann, thinkin' my business were her business, she begun to talk. Then I stuck on the breast of my frock, one little, lone, red ribbin, thes to let Sally Ann know that my business was a thing that I were goin' to tend to myself 'ithout a-askin' of her fer help. To tell the truth, I hadn't been pesterin' my mind noways about Jeems Boze partic'lar. *But* when Jeems Boze got hisself some new clothes, and begun to hold hisself straighter, and look like he thought somethin' of hisself, and when I ketched his eye Sunday meetin's, lookin' at me friendly and wishful, and I let him see my feelin's weren't hurted by sech behavior, why, of course I begun to have that same flutterin' in my breast that a female can't keep herself from havin' sech a time and in them conditions, albe same like before it were not expected, and I begun to be a-waitin' to see what Jeems Boze were goin' to do about it.

“But now Sally Ann she let her tongue go loose at both ends, as the sayin' is, against Jeems Boze to sech a scan'lous pitch that it skeert Jeems Boze, and made him drap back further than before in his bachelor ways, and he never come anigh me, and he tell people that it wouldn't be so very long before they'd find him at the p'int o' death. Now, don't you know, Mrs. Ivy, that sech as that made me

feel sorry for Jeems Boze? Why, of course it was obleeged to. And then I put on more red, and I determined in my mind to thes *kiver* myself all over with red ruther than to let Sally Ann drive him to the insignif'cance she were appearant bent on. But you know, Mrs. Ivy, I never could ketch Jeems Boze's eye to let him understand my signs and feelin's, he were that skeert of Sally Ann. That made the yearnester the flutterin' I had fer him in my breast, and so one Sat'day night, when my Sam were startin' for his wife's house (she that were Jeems Boze's Judy), I told him to tell his Marse Jeems from me not to mind Sally Ann's talk, and that I had neither part ner lot in it. And when Sam came back a Monday mornin', he said the words made his Marse Jeems fa'rly jump out of his cheer; and next mornin' he got out his new clothes and put 'em on, and he shaved hissself nice and clean, and he told Sam if he didn't feel ruther skeert to do it, he'd get on his horse and ride straight over here. And he told Sam to tell me to try to fetch back my mind, and see if I couldn't ricollect tellin' him the reason why he hadn't got married it were because his time hadn't come. Did you ever see anything dilicater than that? And I made Sam go right straight back and tell him I ricollect perfect, and it seemed like to me the same as a marracle.

And so, not long after, here come a-ridin' up the lane nobody but Jeems Boze, a-suspicionin' of which I had already put on my best frock. And soon as he come in the house and shook hands, he trimbled and he sneezed and he set down awk'ard-like; and I were pleased in my mind to see his egzitement, because you know yourself it's the nature of a dilicate female, even if it have been twice before, to not seem like too willin' when a man person come at her on sech a arrant, and so he may feel ruther skeert and dubious, and not be holdin' his head up too high and bold. At first Jeems Boze were speechless till I handed him a tumbler of water with my own hands, and said I thought he looked uncommon well that mornin', which he did; then he peertened up, and — well — what followed, followed. And I sent for Billy and the girls that's married; and they all acknowledged I have been a good mother to them, and that if I felt it were my juty to get married again, they were thankful in their mind it were as good a man as their Uncle Jeems Boze. Of course Sally Ann knocked under when she found she had it to do."

She paused awhile, and then added with some pathos:

"And why shouldn't she, Mrs. Ivy? What have I done to be found fault with by Sally Ann

or anybody else? Is a widder, even a two-time widder, got nothin' else to do but thes set down or go about grievin' fer them that's gone, and a-complainin' of the good Lord fer takin' of 'em? And ain't a widder, even if she ain't young as some, ain't she liable to get lonesome and to want company like other wimming? I know well as if I had heard 'em that some people laughed when the widder Lazenberry have got married a third time, and that to Jeems Boze, not expected. But sech as that don't faze, and is perfect idle wind to me and Jeems Boze, that if I ever see a happy man person and contented in his mind, as he acknowledge it hisself, it is Jeems Boze, that he solemn declare he were glad his time never come till it did; and as for kind and biddable and covenant man person for a woman to have about the house, and do what she want done, and not do what she don't want done,—I say it bold,—I don't believe in my mind there's anybody anywheres to beat Jeems Boze. And, oh, it's my hopes and my honest pra'rs that the good Lord mayn't seemeth him meet to make me another widder. For, as you has the expe'unce to know yourself, Mrs. Ivy, it's only them that has been one that know what the feelin's of it is."

"You see, my son," Mr. Pate said, in con-

clusion, "that courtin' and marryin' ain't a thing of people's age, ner of their been married before oncet or twicet and left singuil. I might add three times or four times; number o' times got nothin' to do with it. It's thes the natur' o' people to not want to live by their lone self, and when their pardner is took away from 'em, if they don't git another it ain't because they don't want to. And when you git old enough to study about sich things, if your mind have the strenkt to take 'em in, you'll see that them married wimming that busies theirselves the most strenious about widders a-marryin' ag'in is the very ones, nine times in ten, to do the very same like ways theirself when their husbands drap off— young or old, make no odds which, 'ithout they're so old as to forgit or to not know what they do want. Time and tide waits for nobody. And if you do be too young to know it now, it's a fact that you never will hear a sensibler observation than what that call itself.

"You better go back to your ma now. She might git oneasy and be a-sendin' fer you. Spent that thrip I give you Chuesday? There, now, I knowed he had! Never mind. If both of us lives to his next birthday, he shall have another."

OUR WITCH

OUR WITCH

What are these . . .

That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,

And yet are on 't?

— MACBETH.

WITCHES — those, I mean, that were visible, tangible, and liable to be caught at their practices — were scarce in the extreme South. Warm weather or something else discouraged immigration. Now and then an old early settler who was posted on their history was not quite sure in his mind but that ghosts of a few flitted about of nights, playing their pranks, though not to a very alarming degree. Relief of its kind was derived from the generally accorded fact that their visitations were confined to those of their own sex, and consisted chiefly in knotting manes and tails of mares, drying up milch cows, ruffling the feathers of setting hens, and spreading nightmares over the breasts of honest women, who, after hearty suppers richly deserved for hard days' work, went to their beds never dreaming, until fast asleep, what was coming. Preventives were used by those who were apprehensive of

such molestings of their premises. The one regarded most reliable was a meal-sieve (called sifter) hung on the outside of doors. The argument ran thus: From the very beginning of the institution of witches, one of the fixed rules of their discipline was that, when confronted by this useful domestic implement, they were to go in and out of every one of its openings before proceeding farther. Pausing to calculate that such continuous up-and-down, right-and-left movement over and through a limited circular plane, on, above, and beneath which were few objects to interest a traveller, might not be completed before daybreak, more often than otherwise they turned their backs and went away in disappointment.

Yet there was believed to be one in bodily, actively moving, even notably discernible, existence, whose suspected practices in the way of her profession wrought for a while considerable distress in a family that was living theretofore in moderate peace, at least with the world outside of itself. The witch was Mrs. Polly Boddy, and the family the Magraws. From the very start Mrs. Magraw, whose maiden name was Nancy Tall, was plain, and she continued growing on that line until one ceased to look for any change for the better. During the good many years of waiting in her young womanhood she

did not seem, except at times, painfully heartsick at the delay of suitors, and was said to have a disposition that under the circumstances was, if not remarkably good, not as bad as some. In time came along Andy Magraw, a Scotchman, two years younger, who by degrees offered himself; and she took him much as one, disappointed of something dainty and hot, takes a cold potato rather than go without dinner of any sort. He would have been regarded as plain himself except for the advantage he held of continuous comparison. They had one child; but, a weakling from the beginning, it gave way to the season of its first summer, and had no successor. As time went on, the wife, never of a cheerful spirit, seemed to grow less and less satisfied with surroundings both at home and outside of it, and learned to be quite voluble in the use of complaining words. This became particularly so of late, although she was now sixty years old.

Mrs. Boddy, on the contrary, with an excellent beginning, had kept it up surprisingly well. She had outlasted two husbands, — stout, brave men in their time, — and now, the junior of Mrs. Magraw by only four years or such a matter, looked hardly fifty. Not only that, but the bland smoothness of her cheek, the cheery beaming of her eyes, the uniform tidiness of her dress, and the cordial welcome of her voice and general

manner, all made it seem that she intended to keep herself young and agreeable as long as possible.

They were adjoining neighbors, the Magraws living on the first rise beyond the river, and Mrs. Boddy a mile farther up the stream, and nearly opposite (on our side) Mr. Johnny Rainey, the oldest deacon in the church.

Mr. Pate, who was the first to tell me this story, showed, I thought, that much kind compassion yet lingered in his recollection of Mrs. Magraw.

"Why, sir, it looked like a pity any female to be so unfort'nate and inmortal plain as what she were. They's a sayin' that pootty is only skin deep, but ugly goes to the bone. It seem like 'ith Mrs. Magraw, the ugly in her cons'tootion went clean thoo and thoo, meat, bone, sinner, and muscle, and kep' itself in every single p'int of view out'ards and in'ards, and that she were jes turned loose in a flock by herself for other people to be sorry for her that had to look at her. They say she were right toler'ble mild and biddable when she were young, and even for a while arfter she got married, exceptin' when she got mad. But somehow she begun to take up the notion that things in gen'l was ag'in' her and gittin' worse a constant. Yit she were a female of powerful sperrit. She worked herself, and she made everything about her work.

“People called her a pincher. She pinched herself, and she pinched the niggers, and she pinched her husband all she could; but who, Andy Magraw, he, good, peaceable man if he were, sometimes bowed up his back, and cussed, and wouldn’t. Some said he were too good and leniunt to her, and if he’d take the reins in his own hand, and let her understand as the head o’ the family he were goin’ to keep ’em, she’d swage down and come reason’ble. But one thing I’ve noticed in my expe’unce, and it’s that them that think they know how to manage sech wives as what Mrs. Magraw were is them that ain’t got ’em theirselves. Andy Magraw I no doubt done the best he knowed how accordin’ to the war’ous risin’s o’ the case before him, so to speak. He never talked ag’in’ her to t’other people, and nobody daresn’t talk ag’in’ her where he were.

“Now, as for the poor ’oman believin’ in witches, they was other people in them times that done the same,—that is, to a’ extent,—and if anybody disputed ’em, they’d fetch in Scriptur’ to back ’em up. My own sip’rate opinion is that that were a long time ago, and in a fur-away fur’n country, where the good Lord seemeth him meet to app’int ’em for the skearin’ o’ them hard-head Izzleites out o’ their disobedience; but in these Nunitied States, and

special' in as healthy, peaceable country as the State o' Georgie, it's not worth while for people to bother their brains overly much about 'em. The stand my father always took about the things, it were—if you let them alone and not try to locate 'em, they'd let you alone. The trouble 'ith Mrs. Magraw, she wouldn't."

Suspicious, first vague, had been lurking for some time in the mind of Mrs. Magraw. Feeling herself Mrs. Boddy's superior in every quality except personal attractiveness, she began to speculate how it was that the cheek of a woman not far from being as old as herself, survivor of two husbands, held, and kept holding, the beauty of her youth. Instead of being marred by marriage life and widowhood, it seemed to be improved by them—specially the latter. Her gift of resilience from the loss of such companionship Mrs. Magraw for a time confessed not to understand. Particularly within this last gone year, since Mr. Boddy had been given a place behind the garden under the cedars by the side of his predecessor, the woman looked, and to Mrs. Magraw's mind behaved, as if her desire were set upon going back to the period of youngest womanhood, to stay there forever. For all such as these Mrs. Magraw in time judged the cause to be preternatural, and so informed her husband. The grunt heard from his breast made

her feel without any doubt that the judgment was correct.

Visiting between these ladies, always rare, for some time past had ceased. The difference was too great to let either, particularly the elder, become fond of seeing or being seen by the other. Necessarily they saw each other on monthly-meeting Sundays, and must sometimes be thrown together going or returning. It had been painful always to Mrs. Magraw that the other was so much praised by all the men, and even by some of the women who were satisfied with their own conditions and belongings. Henceforth she watched and brooded, occasionally hinting to others besides her husband the decision at which she had arrived. Lately two of the milch cows on the place suddenly went dry, both on the very same day. On the next the horn of another set in to crumple. Quickly thereafter, a middle-aged hen, theretofore as steady and sure as any the most respectable of her sex, one morning, in the very middle of her three weeks' incubation, came off the nest with every feather ruffled, and no sort of handling could make her stay there again when the back of the yard woman was turned, though she repeatedly put her upon it. Finally, Flower, a red-and-white speckled calf of extraordinary promise, came under the spell. Irrational or not, of all the animals in the family,

Mrs. Magraw's heart was set on this calf. She was a very pink of a calf, pretty, shaped to perfection, sweet-tempered, light-hearted even to frequent gayety. Often and often, when her mistress was walking in the yard, wherein she was let to be petted, the dear little thing, making a festoon of her lovely white tail, would caper about her mistress in all sorts of exuberant fun, occasionally stopping immediately before her and gazing into her face apparently in great admiration for it. One evening, while the two were in this affectionate attitude to each other, the elder was heard to say:

“Poor innocent little Flower! Mist'ess don't seem so awful ugly to you, does she?”

The youngling licked her extended hand, and bounded away for further sport, leaving the other with a corner of her apron to her eyes.

Now even this favorite, heretofore so cheerful, so harmless, so full of goodly promise, was noticed one day looking melancholy. To fondest caressings she gave no answer but doleful cries. For four days she dwindled—if with any earthly disease, one impossible to be diagnosed. On the fifth she died. They buried her in the garden. A basket of nice pebbles was gathered, and spread over her grave.

After a day given up to mourning, of its kind

earnest, even distressing, came on dire resentment. To her husband Mrs. Magraw said :

“What made me know positive in my mind it were her,—about that poor calf anyhow, if not the t’others,—when me and her were flung together on the road last meetin’-day, and I were obleeged to say somethin’ to all her deceitful palarver, and I told her about Flower, she looked at me out of one eye, and she smiled at me insignificant, and said she hoped I’d be able to raise her ; and the very next day it took to drindlin’. And if you don’t do somethin’ about it, Andy Magraw, I will. You know I can shoot a shot-gun mighty nigh as well as you can, and I’ll go to that horrid witch’s cuppen and calf parscher, and I’ll keep goin’ there tell every one of ’em lays dead. What you goin’ to do, Andy Magraw ?”

Mr. Magraw, although feeling not quite sure that occult evil influences had not been among the cattle and poultry, yet had no sort of sympathy with his wife’s convictions; for, like other men, he much admired and respected Mrs. Boddy. Abundant experience, however, having taught him that argument against any opinions once risen in his wife’s mind served only to fix them more firmly therein, he briefly speculated on what to do in order to appease what boded serious scandal. After some meditation he gave

out that he would try to find out if anything could be done.

“In a day or two I’ll go over there and peruse around.”

“Yes, you’ll peruse around, and that’s all you’ll do.”

“Vera weel, then; I won’t go.”

“Yes, you will.”

He uttered a grunt, and went out.

Brief and inarticulate as was this response, Mrs. Magraw knew very well that it contained more meaning than some other men’s multitudes of words. So when he returned he found that she had moderated; for daring and unreasonable as she had become, she must recognize, if she did not respect, the sentiment of the community that it was not becoming for a married woman to move in public with no co-operation of her husband in matters threatening collisions with outsiders. The heaviest complaint that her mind had ever lodged against him was his persistent, doggedly obstinate refusal to quarrel with her. One day her disgust for his weakness on this line had driven her to say:

“Andy Magraw, it do seem to me that when you was very born, they come mighty nigh a-makin’ you a fool.”

“Fool! Why, Nancy,” he answered meekly, “it’s the vera name I answer to.”

And her reply was: "Goodness gracious! To think a man would be satisfied with them conditions! I wish I was one of 'em."

"Umph, umph! We never know about sic things."

After another day's rumination, the while making a quiet visit to the old man Rainey, which he did not mention to her, next morning, getting himself up with some smartness, he remarked that he was going to call upon Mrs. Boddy. The little confidence of his wife was somewhat enhanced when, taking down his rifle from its forks, he loaded and shouldered it.

Noting his approach, the rosy widow despatched her house-girl to gather in the garden a handful of mint. By the time the usual greetings, neighborly questionings and answerings, and a few remarks on the weather were over, there was handed to the visitor a tumbler, of the size they had in those days, brimming with a julep of a savor whose better neither eye nor nostril nor throat of man was ever regaled with. Under the influence of this king (or queen, as the case may be) of Southern potations, whatever remonstrance might have been on Mr. Magraw's mind even to hint sneaked out and tried to hide behind his back. He was not an intemperate man at all. Yet from his ancestors he had inherited quick recognition of a good thing, and prompt-

ness of acceptance when thus graciously extended. As he sat and sipped, Mrs. Boddy, who merely for the sake of added grace to her hospitality had joined him in a glass smaller and paler, seemed to him to float in a very lake of loveliest innocence. When these cheering rites were over, and some moments had passed in waiting announcement of the special purport of the call, the lady, smiling kindly, said :

“Mr. Magraw, of course I know what your wife sent you here for. Mrs. Magraw has been talking and making her insinuations about me for a good while. I’ve stood it because I knewed she couldn’t stop her mouth any more than she could help some other things she’s got. I never had anything more to do with her home matters and concerns than she’s had to do with mine — that is, as I know of; and as for being the witch she tells people I am, it’s all news to me, and, of course, I some rathers she’d stop it.”

“Why, Mrs. Boddy,” he answered, with uplifted hand, “I dunn — I — I — Mrs. Boddy — ye — ye knaw — a man canna say anything ag’in’ his ain — I knaw weel ye’re na witch, but I canna — canna — ”

His tone and manner were so entirely what a good man’s should be in the circumstances that she was deeply sensible of them, and, interrupting him, said :

“You’re perfectly right, Mr. Magraw. No good man will open’ take sides against his own wife. It is nothing. Let it go. I don’t think anybody is apt to take me for the thing she names me; and now I see how it pains you, I’m going to try and not let it trouble me any more. It hasn’t but mighty little. I think it must be Mrs. Magraw’s health. I’m glad to see you looking so well, Mr. Magraw.”

He gave himself a nervous shake; then, rising, said:

“Mrs. Boddy, I — thank ye, ma’am. I think mysel’ somethin’ may be wrang wi’ Nancy, and — and — I bid ye guid day, Mrs. Boddy.”

He went away, trailing his rifle as if he were ashamed of it.

“Good man,” soliloquized Mrs. Boddy — “the best, the very best, in all this neighborhood — not hardly except’ old Brother Rainey — spite of being yoked to a woman that of all in this world I do suppose is the sorrowfullest, ugliest, the foolishhest, suspiciousest, the backbitingest, mouthiest, and the general beatingest, that — may the good Lord have mercy on us all poor sinners! Amen, I pray!”

When Mr. Magraw, upon returning, reported such incidents of the visit as he deemed prudent, his mate broke out upon him with words of which the following are a few:

“Yes; it’s perfect cle’r that thing have witched you too, Andy Magraw. You never was a man that could tackle with women, exceptin’ of me, that can’t help herself; and I can smell on you this minute the mint-dram she give you, that before you got to the gate I see you tryin’ to blow off the scent of it on your hat and on your coat-sleeve. If such as that is to go on, they’d as well begin to season the lumber for my coffin. But I tell you now, Andy Magraw, it shan’t go on! She may witch you in the bargain of them poor dumb cattle, but she don’t tromple on me no furdur. You hear me?”

“Well, now, my son,” said Mr. Pate, “good, patient man if he were, Andy Magraw couldn’t always stand her mouth. And so he told her plain down that Mrs. Boddy weren’t no more a witch than she were, and he add that maybe the reason he want to got shet o’ the julip, it were he were afeard, when the scent struck her, it might make her yit hotter with Mrs. Boddy for bein’ more liber’l than what she were in the mixin’ of her sperrits and sugar, and the dividin’ with other people. Because she were knew to love the article well as Andy, albe’ nobody ever accused her of knockin’ it too heavy. My expe’unce is, mighty few people make ser’ous objection to a julip in its place, when people that makes ’em know what they’re about, which

all don't, unfort'nate, and some may push the use of 'em to a too much extents. But them words of Andy made her ravin' mad, and she declared that if the good Lord have made her a man — that he, unfort'nate, didn't — she'd raise thunder quicker'n ever run down a skinned poplar. Did anybody ever! And she said that the very next mornin', soon as her breakfast she would git, on her head her bonnet it would go, on her horse she would mount, and then ride about 'mong the neighbors, a-forewarnin' of 'em ag'in' the witch, Polly Boddy. What you think Andy Magraw done then? He determ'ed in his mind that it were absolute necessity for the old man Rainey to take a hand in the business, him bein' the onl'est man in the whole neighborhood she were afeard of, because it were him that persuaded the brothern to let her in the church when they hizzitated about her high temper and the freckwent sloshin' of her tongue. He argied that if she didn't quite have grace, it might come to her arfter she were took in. Of course Andy couldn't go in, because o' his cussin' sometimes, which he never denied. And so Andy, a-knowin' she wouldn't take his advices, sot in, he did, to beggin' her to not fetch the thing up in the church, and special' not to go to the old man Rainey about it. Fact is, Andy Magraw were one o' the sensiblest men

they had in them days, spite o' bein' surrounded with sech a wife. The old man Rainey were the oldest and influentiallest man in the church, and Andy Magraw knewed that if anybody could head her in her ravin' course it were the old man Rainey."

The praise of Mr. Pate had good foundation. Immediately after the utterance of Mr. Magraw's urgent remonstrance, his wife, becoming calm, looked at him pitifully and said :

"Well, Andy Magraw, I do think, on my soul, you're the poorest hand to help out and give advice to a body in the suffering fix I'm in that ary poor woman ever took up with for a husband in this lonesome, perishing world. Why, man, sence you mention it, it's the very thing for me to do; and I'm a-goin' straight over to Br'er Rainey's if my life is spar'd tell to-morrow."

He nodded in humble disappointment, and after dinner, resuming his rifle, remarked that he believed he would go out and see if he could not find a hawk. Returning in the evening with the body of one of these enemies of the barn-yard, he was comforted to see her in reasonable placidity of mood, in which she remained for the rest of the day.

Everybody said that Uncle Johnny Rainey had a long head, which he used for his own

good and that of his neighbors, particularly those belonging to the congregation of his church. In the half-century of his diaconate he had settled a greater number of difficulties and disputes, doctrinal, social, and domestic, than any other one man in his generation throughout that whole region. Calm and conciliatory, but confident, firm, even adroit when needed, he kept his near a thousand fellow-members in all possible harmony. The case of Mrs. Magraw had long been in his mind, and he was not surprised at the coming of its climax. On her approach, he met her at the gate, helped her to dismount, and led her into the piazza, where he had instructed his wife, after a few words of welcome salutation, to leave them together. When all preliminaries were over, and Mrs. Rainey on polite pretence withdrew, the good man began to talk. He well judged that it was best for him to take the initiative. As for his supplies of words, whether at conference meetings or other occasions, inexhaustible is hardly the word; yet with this single hearer he deemed a couple of hours enough for his purpose.

“Sister Magraw,” he began, “my mind—I don’t know as you may know it, but my mind jes here lately it have been a-runnin’ consider’ble on witches, and I been a-studyin’ up the subjects

of 'em, from the witch o' Endor down till now that they seem to be a sispicion that they is one, and maybe two, in the Jukesborough Baptis' cong'egation."

"Two, Br'er Rainey?" Mrs. Magraw, shuddering, asked.

"Come, Sister Magraw, don't put in and inter-rup' me. Yes, one; maybe two; and if the thing ain't stopped, no tellin' how many more. Now, you know — if you don't, I'll tell you — that the onl'est way, when oncet a witch were caught, and pine-blank proved — the onl'est way laid down for her was to burn her up bodaciously. That have been done in time, more or less; yit from what I could gether in my readin' o' hist'ry, them that done it was sorry they done it arfter the thing blowed over, a-feelin' jub'ous in their mind if they didn't act hasty about the takin' in o' evidence. In my own mind — that is, in what mind the good Lord, for useful purpose, I humble hope, he have merciful putt in here — right in here" — thankfully tapping his forehead with a forefinger — "my opinion, as no longer than day before yisterday I told Sister Boddy, that I didn't believe they was a witch in the whole State o' Georgie, and special' in the cong'egation where I been app'inted deacon by the reg'lar layin' on o' hands accordin' to the Scriptur'; and I added to Sister Boddy that ef,

for instance, she, Sister Polly Boddy, was to fetch up in conf'ence, — I didn't name names plain and open p'inted as some does, — but ef she was to fetch up ary 'nother female o' the cong'regation for bein' of a witch, and then couldn't prove it to the satisfaction o' the brothern, — which they is no doubt she couldn't, — then and in them case she might possible be turned out herself, and, what's more, run the resk o' bein' sued for slander and scandal by the said female sister, and have her plantation and the very house over her head took for damage. Now, as for the dryin' up of milch cows, and the drindlin' o' calves, what I told Sister Boddy of my expe'unce, it were that ever sence I could 'member, and long before, milch cows and calves and settin' hens been doin' them things when the time for 'em come for doin' o' 'em, like the Scriptur' say they's a time for all things."

About thus on, on, and on he discoursed, occasionally turning to note upon the listener's face the effect of his words. It was plain to see that they were going straight home. She shuddered both at the intimation clearly conveyed that she herself was suspected by Mrs. Boddy of witchcraft, and at the risk of being sued by her for words already spoken to many persons. When at last Mr. Rainey saw that he could safely stop, he did so, and looked benignly into her face.

“Br’er Rainey,” she said, panting, but in a low tone, “I didn’t know any of Polly Boddy’s milch cows had dried up, nor any of her calves —”

“There! Of course you didn’t. I knowed you didn’t; and you had no more to do with ’em than I did, which of course I couldn’t, not bein’ of a female. And it all come, like sech always in gen’l does, from neighbors not understandin’ one ’nother better, and makin’ ’lowances for nobody bein’ perfec’. Is there anything on your mind, Sister Magraw, you wanted to open to me special’?”

“N-no, Br’er Rainey; not now. My mind has been pestered a good deal here lately; but — but I reckon maybe I’m mistaken. But if Polly Boddy think — oh, my Lord, Br’er Rainey, what is a poor woman to do like me, that nobody ever did keer anything for her, excepting of you?”

The old man, calling in his wife, set in with words of comfort, the latter holding her hand. It was an easy task. Tears long buried at length came in her eyes. When she was slowly riding away, Mr. Rainey said:

“Poor woman! my opinion is, the climak have come on her, and I’m thankful it ain’t of the ravin’ kind. Me and Sister Boddy thought that were the best way to swage her down —

bein' took for a witch herself. But I tell you now, she ain't long for this world."

I let Mr. Pate tell the rest in his own way.

"Old man Rainey were right. It come out that the poor creetur' were out her head. The doctor said she been so ev'y sence her baby died, but he never told nobody but old man Rainey, because tellin' wouldn't do the case no good. Soon as she got home, 'ithout sayin' a word to a soul, smilin' to ev'ybody said anything to her, she went to bed. Andy Magraw put a nigger on a horse and told him not to spar' him gallopin' for the doctor. He say — the doctor say — the egzitement about Mrs. Boddy have been too much for her head, and it have now struck her heart. And he told Andy Magraw to prepar' his mind, and that she weren't goin' to git out that bed alive. And what time she lasted she were perfec' calm and biddable, and she talked pleasant about people and things forty and fifty year before. And when she give out final, they said it were same as a little baby goin' to sleep in a cradle. And if anybody ever see a man cry and go on about a dead companion, it were that same Andy Magraw. And that's the end o' the tale about the witch."

I felt much surprise at a finish so unusually abrupt. Evidently Mr. Pate had anticipated it.

After a brief pause, looking down into my unsatisfied face, he said :

“ Well, what is it ? What more you want ? ”

I ventured to ask what became of them afterward.

“ Of who ? ” he asked, in teasing delay — “ of Andy Magraw or Mrs. Boddy ? ”

“ Of both.”

“ What you think ? Now, jes on a ventur’, what you think ? ”

“ I think they got married.”

“ There, now ! Ain’t it astonishin’ how yearly young boys their mind’ll begin to run on marryin’ ? But I s’pose they can’t he’p it, bein’ of their natur’. Well, I’ll answer your quest’on. Look like they ought to get married, don’t it ? Plantations j’inin’, even their very geese gittin’ everlastin’ mixed. Ev’ybody looked for it, same as the sun a-risin’ of a mornin’. As for the old man Rainey, he told ’em both, look like to him the good Lord have jes paved the way for ’em ; and they weren’t any doubts but, soon as it were decent, the widder sot her cap for him. But, sir,—and there were the interestest part o’ the whole business,—Andy Magraw took up the idee that maybe it were his fau’t his poor wife gittin’ so discontented and crazy in her mind, and nobody—not even the old man Rainey—could git him to go a-nigh Mrs. Boddy,

albe' he acknowledged he loved her dear. They is people o' that kind, and I has heerd readin' people say that of all denomination of folks, a Scotmon is the stickiest about hangin' to a' idee that have oncet settled itself in the back o' his head. Some said he were crazy as his poor wife not to take up with sech a' opporchunity as Mrs. Boddy — that she were only waitin' for him to name the word. And some even add the opinion of him a-sispicionin' her bein' a witch like his poor wife 'cused her. As for her, Mrs. Boddy, she got tired a-waitin' for him, and she whirled in, she did, and she got married spite of him, and that to a monst'ous good, suitable husband. You know, havin' the expe'unce o' two of 'em, she have learnt to know how to pick and choose. But she always said Andy Magraw were as good a man as ever lived or died, and other people give their opinion the same. But, don't you know, soon arfter she got married seem like he got more and more restless and fidgety in his mind and in his gaits in gen'l, and 'tweren't long before he sold out and moved away — clean away — back yonder where he come from original'."

WEASELS ON A DEBAUCH

WEASELS ON A DEBAUCH

FROM childhood to his death when quite an old man he was called Little Len Cane. Little in physical stature, his thoughts had been ever mainly of little things. It would not have embarrassed him to be asked and to have to answer that he did not know who was governor of the state, or who the presiding judge in that judicial district, because he cared nothing about such matters. He never had had any curiosity to see even the city of Augusta, at which any man of respectable standing in Middle Georgia, during that period (sixty years ago), would have been rather ashamed to acknowledge that he had never been for at least one time. What had been interesting him chiefly from earliest childhood were the lower animals, and the lower among these, especially such as were good to eat but difficult to get, and such as were troublesome. Not that he was fond of game for himself, or ever owned any property to be molested by noxious things. Plain bread and meat with coffee

three times a day were all he wanted. But he liked to accommodate not only the family of his brother Ausbon, with whom, after the death of his parents, he dwelt, but the few neighbors with whom he was familiar. For these he hunted duck and fish in the mill-pond near by, and squirrels and other game among the bordering woods. So well he had learned their habits that it was impossible to escape from his search. If any woman in the community, although not among his particular friends, was sick, and expressed a desire for game, her family knew where it could be gotten with absolute certainty. If it was fish, all the invalid had to do, was to specify the kind, say sucker, cat-fish, eel, or perch, and if the latter, whether bream, silver, or red-belly. For to him were familiar the retreats of all, and the art to capture them.

So it was in regard to plunderers of homesteads among these lower animals. No hawk ever invaded the poultry-yard of his sister-in-law. There wasn't one in that whole region that knew not better than do such as that. Similarly prudent were minks, weasels, rats, and chicken-snakes. A reasonable number of mice might circulate about the corn-crib, partly because what they consumed was hardly missed, and partly to satisfy invaders which, grown desperate by the absolute dearth of booty there, might

resort to the hen-house, whereat, although destined to certain seizure and punishment afterwards, they might inflict damage which it would cost pain and some trouble to repair.

He never boasted of his accomplishments, unless so might be regarded an expression of some little impatience with people who, instead of coming to him in order to find out what they ought to have found out for themselves about matters pertaining to their own well-being, concerned themselves about governors, and judges, and politics, and such things which in his opinion they had not one single grain of use for under the sun. Perhaps there might have been a little vanity in carrying about with him one or other trophy won by creek or woodland. Occasionally he wore a mink-skin cap with eel-skin band, he picked the touch-hole of his long, single-barrel shot-gun with the tusk of a cat-fish, and what little moneys he had were kept in a purse which once had been upon the back of a weasel.

When I was a child I used to listen with much interest to old Mr. Pate, who had known Little Len well, and who was fond of relating incidents in his history.

"He weren't, Little Len weren't," he often said, "no, in what people in general *call* smart. Len weren't smart that way, not a bit."

When his parrents first sent him to school, he couldn't, or he jes' wouldn't, learn about books, no matter how heavy the schoolmarster putt the hick'ry on him. 'Stead of that, Len would be watchin', even in the schoolhouse, how to catch flies and things on the sly, and outside he'd be studying about pisants, and yaller-jackets, and bumble-bees, and lizzards, and sap-suckers, and even doodles, and things nobody else ever keered much about, and all, it seem like, jes' for cur'osity. Why, sir, he could call a doodle out of his hole quicker, and with fewer words and less noise, than any boy I ever see. And so final they let him quit school; and if he never did, and always wouldn't, do any reg'lar work, yit he were always a useful little fellow in the family in one way and another, helpin' to take keer of things, special weakly little young animals, — except babies, and them never would he even tech when he could help it. In things like that and keepin' off prowlers of all kind he were the smartest man I ever know, if a body could call a man one that in some respect were so little *of* a man. And as for marryin' and havin' a wife, I've heerd him acknowledge many time that sech a idee never come into his head."

Among many things related by the old man was the following, as on a morning in the

summer we were sitting in the piazza of Hines's store, on the roadside, at the foot of our grove.

"To show you how smart Len were, I'll tell you about him and the weasels, which I never laid eyes on the things but once in my life, and wouldn't done it then, exceptin' for that same Len Cane. I don't know as I ever see my wife (my first wife, I mean)—in fact, I jes' am certain in my mind I never see her madder than one mornin' when, goin' into the hen-house to look arfter some settin' hens, she found six of 'em stretched out dead on the ground. She called me to come there quick, and when I see the destruction of the varmint, I jes' couldn't keep *from* cussin', which, hadn't been she were so mad herself she'd a-scolded strong; for she were a honest, good Christian woman, and no mistake. And then she asked me in a loud tone of voice, 'Mr. Pate, why don't those men, you among them, sometimes, that hunt foxes that do little or no harm, with their hounds and horns, why don't you go to killing off them varmints that are the very oudacousest, tormentingest things that women have to putt up with in all this troublesome world?' Well, I had to answer well as I could; for you know, or if you don't now, when you get big enough, you will know, they isn't much fun in the huntin' of minks. For the things is that sly, if you actuil

see one run in his hole, and you dig for him, ten chances to one when you git to the bottom, he ain't there."

Interesting to me as was the circumstantial account of the old man, I must repeat here only a brief portion. It was then according to the narrator that Mrs. Pate, whose wrath had no notion of subsiding, declared that she would send for Len Cane. Len liked well that excellent woman, and was even very grateful to her for the help given by her during a long spell of sickness which he had had several years ago, and so Len responded promptly to her call. After minute inspection of the bodies of the dead, and a scrutinizing survey of the ground inside and for some rods that outside the hen-house, they repaired to the mansion where a colloquy occurred, a scrap of which, as I recall it, I will give.

Len. Bad piece o' business. What you think it were, Missis Pate?

Mrs. Pate. Why, a mink, of course. Why, didn't our children day before yesterday see one run in his hole in a bank on the spring-branch, and didn't I tell Mr. Pate about it, and didn't he say he jest as well go look for a needle in a fodder stack, and you see the consequences of it all? Been a fox, they'd a been have a dozen hounds in less than a hour, and enough hurraing

and yelping and blowing of horns to deaf a body's ears.

Len. Yes, ma'am, they'll hunt things they know is no manner o' use to kill or to eat, and they'll let go free them that'll do more 'struction in one night than a fox'll do in his whole lifetime. Still, Missis Pate, Mr. Pate needn't dug for that mink. Time he'd got or thought he'd got to the bottom o' his hole, that mink might o' got out and made his way across the spring-branch half way to Fulsom's Creek. But did *you* think it were that mink killed them hens, Mr. Pate?

Mr. Pate. I hain't a doubt about it, Len, nary blessed doubt, him or some other one of the specie.

Len. Well, it weren't that one, nor none of the specie that done it, onlest you may call a weasel so; for that's what done it.

Mr. Pate. A weasel? I've heard o' the things; but I never see one in all my born days. Ain't you mistaken, Len?

Len. No mistake about it. It were a weasel. They ain't plentiful about this kind of a lat'chude, a bein' of a varmint which a body can see, from their fur, that roams in countries where its colder than we has among us here. They'r a sca'ce creatur', and they'r so shy and dodgy that it ain't easy to come up with 'em. It took

me, I don't know how long it took me to find out their ways. But I done it at last, and it bein' Missis Pate that wants it done, I'm a goin' to ketch this one for her, a knowin' she like no sich 'struction about her among things she raise herself.

Mr. Pate. That's right, Len; go it. I'll do what I can; I've got six as good hounds as the next man, I don't care who he is.

Len. Can't be done to-day, Mr. Pate. It's too late now, and besides, we've got to fix for him the next time he come; for he's shore to come ag'in. When he come ag'in and have got drunk, if you'll send for me promp', we'll git him.

Mr. Pate. Drunk? Did you say *drunk*, Len?

Len. Yes, sir, drunk were the words I said.

Mr. Pate. Come, Len, none of your projickin'. I'm not a man,—and I think you ought to know I'm *not* a man—to be projicked with and fooled with.

Mrs. Pate. Laws, Mr. Pate. Don't you suppose Len know what he's a talking about? What else made me send for him? I know he ain't a wanting to fool when he see how tore up my feelings is about them hens. Go on, Len. You say the things gits drunk?

Len. That they do, Missis Pate, and if things is done like I say, next time that weasel come here and you send for me next mornin',

soon you'll see with your own eyes if what I tell you ain't so, and he'd a cut the throats of more of 'em last night if he hadn't got drunk and found he had to take hisself away or git caught.

Mrs. Pate. My sakes alive! I didn't even dream the things was that oudacious.

The instructions left by Len were to have several wagon-loads of rails taken from fences of adjacent patches and deposited in a pile a few feet from the hen-house. These were executed under the eyes of Mrs. Pate, who afterwards waited for results with what patience she could command. About four days afterwards her ire rose if possible to white heat when, in the early morning, having repaired to the hen-house, fifteen, including hens, pullets, roosters, young and old, lay still in death, their neatly cut throats seeming to appeal for compassion for such untimely tragic end. Among them was a favorite speckled matron, which had been raised by hand in the very house, and which from pure gratitude and affection came often into the little back shed room, laid her egg on the floor or on the bed, lifted up her cackle and then went back to her business out of doors. When she also was found among the slain, her mistress, as she freely admitted afterwards, had to just give up and cry, "because," she pleaded, "it not only made

me mad, but it hurt my feelings in the bargain, and I couldn't help it."

Len made haste to come to the call that had been sent by a swift runner. After counting the dead accurately with as much of a smile as ever could light up his pale, serious face, he said :

"My, my ! Fifteen of 'em ! Had a big spree, didn't they ? Obleeged to be more'n one of 'em. We've got 'em, cert'n, and no mistake."

"And now," he said kindly, "sense the thing have been come up with, I'll tell you, Mr. Pate, and special you, Missis Pate, how I got him."

"Got him !" said Mr. Pate. "I don't see where you've got anything of the kind. What you talkin' about, Len ?"

"Missis Pate," Len said, turning resignedly to her, "Mr. Pate'll believe nothin' till he see it with his own eye. I'll tell *you* where the things is, and I'll tell you how they got there, for there's more'n one of 'em. Now, Missis Pate, you have knew people that they loved whiskey to that they'll git so drunk they can't wobble till the stuff have died out in 'em, and they can git back the use o' theirselves. Well, now, madam, it took me a longer time than the miser'ble things is worth to find out about 'em, because they're so sca'ce and sly and awful dodgy. But a weasel is jest as fond o' blood, and special

chicken blood, as a drunkard is of whiskey, and it have the same eefeck on him. If he can git enough of it, he'll keep a swiggin' at it till he gits that drunk that the first place he can creep into when he's perfect full, in there he go and stay till he can sleep his drunk off. As for them weasels that were in that hen-house, last night, if Mr. Pate'll take the trouble to have them rails took up, them weasels is in there some'rs."

"Well," said Mr. Pate, when relating the incident to me, "it did beat. When he begun talkin' to me about weasels gittin' drunk, I a'most suspicioned he were gittin' out of his poor little head; but don't you know, sir, at the bottom o' that pile o' rails, there they wor, *three of 'em*, sir, and they were that perfect swelled up with *dead* drunk, they didn't know it when the hounds killed 'em. Time that were over, Len left, because he say a turkle have been in his cat-fish hole on the creek, and he have to go there right away to fix to git him. He wouldn't hardly stay long enough to hear all my wife's thankin's she give him; but which all sech as that go to make me say that Len Cane, little as he were, and not botherin' hisself about matters he know nothin' about, yit in some things — well, sir, for smart in them things, *I* never see Little Len Cane's equil."

EPHE

EPHE

EPHE. Except by his mother, and then only when in angry or monitory mood, he was never called otherwise. "Ephom! You Ephom!" He always knew by the cry that something was to be paid; yet he was used to it, and, after an instalment was entered, went along much as before. He and his sister Jane, two years older, were children of Susan, a free black woman, whose husband, Ephraim, a slave of Mr. Colin Duncan, had deceased. This gentleman's mansion, a plain two-story, was situate on the hither limit of his plantation, half a mile from the village. The family occupied a small house in one of his fields, where, with a bit of ground and outside employment, they got sufficient living. The woman, honest, industrious, when made a widow obtained Mr. Duncan's consent to become guardian of her family. Such arrangement was usual with persons of her class, in conformity with provision of the General Assembly of the State. Generally they were regarded with kindness, often extending to compassion.

A Fourth Estate, as it were, among slaves and two classes of whites, few in numbers, like their kinsmen in bondage simple, affectionate, recognizing their station to be the very lowest, they deported themselves humbly, and were seldom charged with crimes or even pettiest misdemeanors. If it had not been forbidden by the law, many would have chosen to be sold into slavery.

A few whites, having their likes in every community, dissatisfied with their own conditions, which they had not energy and forethought to improve, addicted to general complainings, made these pointed against free negroes. Even an occasional petty slave-owner, become so by purchase, not by inheritance, joined to greater or less degree, arguing that their presence was a menace to subordination. But sentiment among most persons was in favor of allowing all reasonable privileges in their rather helpless isolation.

In some fashion, not of the best, yet not bad, Ephe grew from infancy to eighteen. Large, of great strength and activity, more industrious and contented when hired, and, indeed, lacking in judgment at work when not under supervision, his time for a year past had been spent mainly with jobs, as hoeing in gardens, chopping wood, and the like, for such as chose to employ him. One day he said to his mother :

“ Mammy, I wish I was a shore ’nough nigger. ”

"Well, ain' you a nigger?"

"Yes'm, but not in dat sense."

"What sense you talkin' 'bout, Ephom?"

"In de sense I want to b'long to Mis Duncan, and him gim me to Marse Johnny to be his nigger for good."

"What make you say dat now?"

"Because dis ebenin', when Mis Felts was payin' me for cuttin' wood, dat Mis Brockett was in de sto', en he cussed me, en ~~he said he~~ wished to Gawd ev'ry free nigger was hung er driv out de lan'. En he look like he were gwine to light on me wid his stick, hadn't been Marse Johnny was passin' by from school, en he tole me to go 'long home, and he tole Mis Brockett he oughtn't 'buse me when I done nothin' 't all to him."

The mother said no more, for she knew that it was not an unreasonable wish. Indeed, towards that class, feeling, even among slaves, besides distinct superiority, in some cases was of contempt for imagined aspirations beyond all hope to compass.

The man Brockett, huge, dark, rugged, had been discharged as overseer by Duncan because of extreme rigor in the discipline of his negroes. His resentment extended to Ephe, who, out of pure fear, had declined to work on his farm near by. David Felts, the other, was a mer-

chant, who, coming there a year or so back, bought a store and rented a dwelling-house. The low prices set on his goods at cash sales, compared with credit practised in the two other stores, drew customers, and soon he was doing what seemed a good trade. Reticent except in matters of pure business or special existing interest, yet he was affable, thankful for patronage however small, and acted as if he sincerely wished to be regarded as a person who had come there to impart as well as receive benefits. From certain remarks he was believed to have come from a town somewhere on the eastern shore of Maryland. His son Joseph, about sixteen, much like him, assisted at the counter, and slept in the back room. The old merchants, although intimating sometimes that Mr. Felts must purchase at lower prices than they could get, seemed as sympathetic as the rest when, one cold, rainy night, the store, with all its contents, except Joseph, was burned to the ground.

I could not well make clear the excitement in that simple community, where house-burnings were almost — incendiarisms absolutely — none. It was just before dawn ; by sunrise everybody, including many from the country, were at the scene. Felts, looking like an extremely poor man, expressed himself, specially to Duncan,

thankful for sympathy, and avowed his conviction that it must have happened by pure accident. Joseph, who had escaped by a miracle, as it were, roused by the smoke and heat, having just time to seize his clothes and break through a window into the street, where he dressed himself, was too sorely shaken to talk much. He could say, however, that Ephe Duncan was at the store the previous night, and, being considerably in liquor, he had let him remain until it was thought safe to send him away; but that he had not the slightest suspicion of his firing the house. Brockett, happy with the excitement, proposed a close search of the premises. In time he picked up, near the gate-opening outside, a much-soiled woollen purse, in which, besides a few small coins, were a five-dollar note and a crumpled paper signed by his guardian, authorizing Ephraim Duncan to contract and receive pay for his work. Joseph, although startled and pained by the discovery, was obliged to admit that he was pretty sure that that note was in the cash-box the evening previous. When this news reached Duncan, who had returned home, he sent a messenger for Ephe and another to the county seat for John Frierson, Esq., his legal adviser.

Eager were the exclamations of the finder.

“But, Mr. Brockett, and you other gentlemen,”

pleaded Felts, "this is a life-and-death matter, a thing I've no idea that poor negro knew, even if he'd been sober, and somehow I can't believe he set fire to the house. I beg you gentlemen to — to —"

"*Mister Felts*," Brockett broke in, "this dev'lish business is got to be put whar it belong, for the safetity of other people well as you. I'm a-goin' for that villion, and if I ain't mistakened, there's men here as will go 'long with me."

With a half-dozen others he set out. Informed by Susan that Ephe had gone to Duncan's, they proceeded thither.

Colin Duncan, of medium height, slender, rather pale, held in much respect by his equals, was not loved by Brockett's set, to whom, though never asserting, he was suspected of feeling strongly the sense of superiority. At the calls of the men, coming upon his piazza, and hearing their business, he said :

"Have you any warrant, gentlemen?"

"No need of any warrant in such a case, Mr. Duncan," said Brockett.

"Oh, yes, there is, gentlemen. All of you, perhaps, excepting Mr. Brockett, know that. I don't say that the boy you seek is on my premises; but if he were, I should hardly feel that, in a case as serious as this, I would do

right in surrendering him except upon process of law.”

His mildness and apparent hesitation emboldened Brockett further.

“Come now, Mr. Duncan, you can’t fool us. We know he’s here, and we’re jes’ simple got to have him. Everybody knows how you respect free niggers above white folks that’s got none of no sort, as I’ve heerd you say with my own years that you wished the whole of ’em was sot free, and you can’t deny it honest.”

“Gentlemen,” Duncan said, smiling, as he looked towards Brockett, “that man *has* heard me say that I believed it would be well, at least for the white race, if the slaves were all liberated. Base as it was, especially on such an occasion, to report only a portion of my words, I care not for it. He is welcome to whatever he can get out of the malignity that he’s been indulging against me since I discharged him from my service. For what he says of my trying to fool, as he terms it, I admit that this negro is now in my dining-room, by the side of my wife, where, until he is demanded by lawful authority, his safety I feel to be as sacred and binding upon me as if he were my own son. I will not deliver him to that man yonder to abuse and outrage before he can be brought to judicial trial, and if he attempts to enter upon my

premises to rescue, I'll shoot him as I would a marauding beast."

Then he drew forth a horseman's pistol.

The men, after brief communings, went away, followed by Brockett, muttering dire threats.

Early next morning Duncan, with Frierson, who had come the night before, set out for Felts' house.

"Don't you say a word, Mr. Duncan," said the latter while on the way. "Let me do all the talking on our side. I think I understand the case now. At all events, I will before I leave this small but respectable old burg."

Felts was much surprised, even exhibiting some embarrassment. When the guests were seated, entering the adjoining room, he had a brief conversation with his wife, who presently went out through a back door. On his return Frierson said:

"We'd like to see your son also, Mr. Felts."

"He's not at home just now, sir; I sent him away upon some business, and he won't be back until three or four days."

"Oh! you sent him away?"

Smiling, as if he had made a point sooner than expected, he fixed upon him a look which, from an astute, experienced lawyer, few besides the innocent can confront. Feeling his way, he noted the almost imperceptible blenching, and said, coldly:

“Perhaps it is as well. I only wished to put to him a question or two, Mr. Felts,” and his eyes pierced through and through, when he added:

“Mr. Felts, this negro did not fire your house. If *you* do not know that, your son does.”

“I know nothing about it, Mr. Frierson,” he answered, with some pleading in his tone, “except what my son said. *He* didn’t accuse Ephe, although it did look suspicious. I do hope on my soul the poor negro isn’t guilty. Mr. Brockett and the other gentlemen will tell you that I said the same thing to them. I made up my mind to not even prosecute for the money, as I got that back.”

“That seems forbearing and kind, sir, but it is not quite satisfactory. The boy did not even steal your money. For his security, it must be made convincingly apparent that he is innocent of any sort of participation in this affair. If it be not, I will myself notify the Solicitor-General to present it before the next Grand Jury. Whatever else comes of that, one thing may be counted certain: a deal of money will be spent before it is ended. Mr. Felts,” — he suddenly broke into loud, commanding interrogation, — “what value would you have set upon this property, and at what sum was it insured? However, however,” as if regretting his words, “I will withdraw those questions — at least for the present — as

I have no right in this private manner to inquire into the details of your business."

Rising, he said to his client:

"Mr. Duncan, I think we may as well retire. I don't see what more can be done until the young man returns. We are sorry to have had to trouble you in your own house, Mr. Felts, but you know we must defend this poor creature as well as we can. I am glad to see how frankly you give him the benefit of your doubts. Perhaps it may be as well not to report what transpired in this interview. I bid you good-morning."

Before Felts could utter the guarded words revolving in his mind they were gone.

"You do beat all creation, Frierson," said Duncan.

"Ah, my friend, at such a time a man must strike first, and at any point he sees or guesses to be weak; I knew that was somewhere when he said his cub was away, and I struck the harder because without intelligent aim. Noting how it hurt, I felt secure, but it was best to press no further. That Joe fired the house, with or without his father's knowledge, for the insurance money, and, to delude their company, pointed suspicion to the negro. Dishonest as they be, they are not bad enough to wish him to hang for it. Partly to prevent that and partly to

avoid close questioning, Felts sent him away. He will return or not according to what seems more advisable. He will, and so must we, keep back what was said on this point. Ephe is all right. Thankful for his escape, we can afford to let the rest settle as they can their own affairs."

Ephe's statement was that, after finishing a job of wood-chopping, he had been called into the store by young Felts and given two drinks of whiskey. He recalled the fact that the boy playfully took from his pocket his purse, and after some time, as Ephe thought, replaced it. He could not tell the hour, but it was late when he left for home, which he easily reached, and entered without disturbing his mother and sister. The former said that, rising earlier than usual, she discovered the blaze at its first appearance in the village, when, going into Ephe's chamber, she found him in a deep sleep. Duncan reported her words, adding that, in his opinion, she was as truthful a person as any of his other acquaintances. People commended the merchant's promptness to express credit of the report, and say that the burning most probably resulted from Joseph's carelessness about the fire on the hearth when going to bed. As for the money, he might have been mistaken in his supposed identification. At all events, its quick loss

showed that, at the time of taking it, he was in such condition as to be hardly responsible for the theft. In about a week Joseph returned, when his meek and humble deportment, and keeping as much as possible out of the stern presence of his father, looked well, very well indeed. It became understood that as soon as affairs could be settled the family would move away. When it was known that the property was in part insured, a thing that never had been done there before, everybody was thankful that not more harm was done. Even Brockett, disappointed and reluctant, at length gave it up.

“I did think,” he said doggedly, “we had a dead holt on one o’ the cussed things that’ll now git cussedder than ever, with rich men to hire lawyers and back ’em. It’s jes’ the luck o’ poor white folks. I believe yit his mammy lied about it. They’ll all do it.”

Ephe’s family had been so frightened that, yielding to their entreaties, he was allowed to make his home with the Duncans. His affection for the family, particularly John, a lad of fourteen, grew to be as devoted as that of a dog for its owner, and somewhat like it. He loved best of all to follow in John’s company and do his bidding. Not long after, when the two were in a buggy drawn by a mettlesome colt that they

were breaking, just as they turned from the highway into the lane leading to the mansion, John, rather against the other's remonstrance, took the reins. Recognizing change in the grip, the colt suddenly set out at full speed.

"Gimme back dem strings, Marse Johnny," said Ephe; but before he could resume, the bit, under the boy's frantic jerking, was broken.

"My Gawd!" cried the negro. Rising, he leaped forward, alighting on the colt's neck. Reaching down, he inserted his thumb into its mouth, and grasped its jaw. The desperate, resistless wrench careened rider and horse, and they were prostrated on the ground, the former underneath, yet keeping his hold. John quickly loosed and let go the maddened beast.

"Is you hurted, Marse Johnny? You ain' hurted, is you?" feebly asked Ephe.

"No, no; but Ephe, dear Ephe, you must be, very badly."

"T'ank Gawd! T'ankey de good Lord!"

"Tell me, Ephe, how are you hurt? Can you get up? My God! what must I do?"

"Neber mind 'bout me, my marster; I git up d'rectly. I ain' hurted so mighty bad. Jes' sorter stunt in — in my br — my bres'."

The boy, raising his head, rested it upon his knee. He coughed, and blood oozed from his

mouth. While the flow was being stanchd he looked up with humblest, blissfulest thankfulness. In another moment upon his face was beauty such as Death sometimes paints withal the plainest among his victims.

A CASE OF SPITE

A CASE OF SPITE

UNDER the old judiciary of the State of Georgia, parties in the courts of justices of the peace were allowed trials of issues by a jury composed of not more than seven men nor less than five. Some incidents of a case in one of these tribunals, in which Josiah Cofield, Esq., presided, I purpose to report.

Daniel Hickson was so dark-skinned that people used to call him Black Dan, and his disposition was much like his outward being. I don't remember ever to have heard any of the neighbors speculate as to which of these two conditions, if either, preceded and produced the other; but all were persuaded in their minds that, if not parent and offspring, they must have been twin brothers, or twin sisters, as (in the language of statutes) the case might be. If Dan Hickson had been ever fully satisfied with an instance of treatment received by him from other people, nobody could tell when that was. Perhaps the nearest approach was the day whereon he got married. For indeed he did

get a wife, and a good one; but some said it was because she was the oldest among seven daughters of a poor man whose name was Scroggins. By this time there was a multitude of children whose chief, if not only advantage over their forbears was change of family name.

Dan was a carpenter; at least he called himself one, and he was nigher being on that line of business than any other. He could drive a jack-plane better than some people who were without much addiction to that kind of exercise, and he could bore an auger hole not so divergent from a perpendicular or a horizontal as to let it seem worth while to make a great fuss about it. The main support of the family was this wife, who slaved herself as if she felt bound to be everlastingly thankful for her escape from old-maidhood and the Scroggins name. Besides all work at home, she took in weaving and plain sewing, sold a few chickens and eggs, all about enough to purchase what few things were needed from the stores. Dan did not complain very often of his wife; for, dull and saturnine as he was, he could not but know that she did almost every blessed thing for the family. Yet he must do a certain amount of mouthing in order to keep her from getting above herself. There is nothing more important, particularly to mean

husbands, than letting women know that they are not the heads of things. Commonly he submitted to home conditions, letting himself and his children be fed and clothed by their mother, fretting himself only to the degree deemed prudent and salutary for his own lordship. Occasionally he took a job, mainly for the purpose of letting it be known what the result would be if he were to put himself fully forth with the vigor which to none except himself he was known to possess.

A mile or so distant, on Williams' Creek, dwelt the Collinses; good, excellent people, whose head, Mr. Jacob Collins, all his acquaintances were bound to respect. To him, from Dan Hickson, some gratitude for little favors now and then was due, but was never acknowledged. One reason was that whenever in his hearing the name of Mrs. Hickson was spoken, Mr. Collins was hearty, sometimes even ardent, in his praise; whereas, at the mention of Dan's, he was either entirely silent, or, after uttering a grunt of varied magnitude and doubtful meaning, passed on as if in search of conversation upon topics more interesting. Occasionally he called upon Dan to do little jobs in fixing up loosened gates and doors, mending plantation gear, and things of that sort. Knowing the motive for which such employment was bestowed, Dan was

not at all thankful for it, and, in time, grew to actually dislike this neighbor.

Mr. Collins, in point of fact, was not so very much whiter than Dan, either in complexion or spirit ; but though reticent and saving almost to closeness, he was thoroughly upright, and much more kind-hearted than his looks, words, and general deportment indicated.

Dan's wife thought a great deal of him, as well she might, for the times when, by one way and another, involving not considerable trouble to himself, he helped them out. Dan's hostility was increased by this feeling in his wife ; not at all from jealousy, but because it looked to him as if meant and intended to lower himself, and at length he came to wish for an opportunity of doing what he called paying Jack Collins back. The latter perhaps would have known of this feeling if, when known, he would have cared about it. As it was, he ignored Dan's sullenness when in his presence, and acted as if nothing was further from his thoughts or desires than being made acquainted with anything ever passing in the head of Dan Hickson. It was destined, however, to come to pass that such acquaintance should be made and in a way as pronounced as it was singular and unexpected.

One night Mr. Collins said at the supper table :

“As I rid by Dan Hickson’s this evenin’ his wife were up to her elbows at the washtub. I halted a bit, howdied, asked how all was, and she the same. She told me Dan were out of a job and she wished he could git one. I didn’t tell her what were on my mind — that Dan better stay at home, and git to ploughin’ and hoein’ and tendin’ to things in gener’l thar, than be foolin’ around lookin’ for jobs that he ain’t fittin’ to manage. But she’s such a hard-workin’, good, fine woman, and have so much scufflin’ to do to git along with all them children, a-addin’ in Dan, I felt sorry for her ; and I told her to tell Dan that if he have a mind to it, he might come over to-morrow mornin’, and I’d see if I couldn’t give him somethin’ to do.”

“Well, *I* should have told her no such thing,” said Mrs. Collins. “Dan Hickson’s work isn’t worth nigh what he charges for it, and besides it’s well known that he don’t like you. His wife is a good, industrious woman, and all that ; but I got no use for Dan Hickson.”

“Oh well, my dear, you’re right about Dan’s work and his gener’l good for nothin’ ; but I’m a-aimin’ at helpin’ his family. As for Dan Hickson not likin’ o’ me, I never pestered my mind about whether he liked me or not, and jest as live he don’t as do. Them is the exact way I

am about Black Dan Hickson, as some calls him."

There were quite a number of little some-things needed to be done about the yard and horse lot; for Mr. Collins, good man that he was known to be, was not one to throw away his money in absence of all consideration. And so when Dan came over next day he was engaged for a set time with the understanding that it might be extended if his work should prove satisfactory. The job, however, was done in a way so slovenly that, at the expiration of the engagement, Mr. Collins frankly owned dissatisfaction, and added that he would have no further use of Dan's services. At that Dan, as had been his intention all along, flew into as much of a passion as he knew not to be unsafe, refused offer of the money stipulated for his work, and, when he had reached, passed through and shut the gate, cried back:

"I'm a-goin' to sue you, sir."

"Well, Dan Hickson," Mr. Collins fired at his back as he rushed away, "you're a triflin'er and a good-for-nothiner creatur' than I knewed, and that's a heap to say." Then he soliloquized thus:

"I have knewed some fools in my life-time; but it seems like to me, if I ain't bad mistakened, Dan Hickson's the biggest I ever come up with.

He sue me, after I offered him the money, and he wouldn't take it! Psher! go 'long with you, Dan Hickson!"

He turned away and let his thoughts seek other themes. A few days afterward, meeting Dan on the street, supposing that his wrath had subsided enough to let him take the money that was due him, he tendered it; but Dan passed on, and, if it had been possible, he would have looked blacker in the face than it was its nature to be. Mr. Collins remarked calmly to a bystander:

"It appears like the fool in Dan Hickson have growed to be so big that it ockepy all his in'ards and can't git out covenant to itself;" and he added: "I've heerd older people than what I call for say that it take a many var'ous kind o' people to make up a world; but I don't hizitate to express my opinion that it seem like to me if Dan Hickson had been left out when they were makin' the one we has at the present, they is a monst'ous few people would a-said they missed him so mighty powerful much. I owe Dan Hickson fifteen dollars; that is, I acknowledge to owe it, albe' the work he done for me ain't worth it; and this is now twice't I've offered to pay him the money, and he won't take it. It remain to see what he's goin' to do about it. I shan't pester myself with him any funder.

He did threaten to sue me, and you know 'Siah Cofield 'll let summons go agins' anybody or any thing to pile up his fees. But if Dan *do* do what he makes his threats, without I'm much mistaken in the law o' such cases, I'll fling him in the cost. Because it'll be nothin' but a case o' spite, and mostly because I got more prop'ty than he have; and he know I think a mighty heap of his wife and a monst'ous little o' him."

It was a frequent and entirely honorable boast of Mr. Collins that he had never been sued in any court, and that whenever he knew the precise amount of a creditor's bill it had been his habit to give or send the money on or before the day on which it was due and payable. Therefore, when, a few days afterward, James Hutchins, the constable, brought a summons to be and appear on the next but one ensuing Saturday at the Courthouse of Josiah Cofield, Esq., to make answer to a suit at the instance of Daniel Hickson, it could hardly be expected that such a man could refrain from at least a few words of righteous resentment.

"Well! the fool have done gone and done like he said he would. It have broke out on him worse than I thought, and Squire Cofield and, as to that, you too, might have knew there were somethin' wrong some'r's."

"I hope you won't blame me and Squire Cofield, Mr. Collins. We're obleeged —"

"Oh no, Jeems, I don't blame you nor him from wantin' your fees; and I can't hold you responsible for Dan Hickson havin' of no more sense. You go 'long, and tell Squire Cofield I'll certain to be thar if I'm a-livin'."

Quite a number of the neighbors used to gather at the court ground on the one Saturday in the month when this tribunal sat. To-day as many as forty were present; for much talk had been given out by both parties in this issue, and considerable curiosity was indulged. Mr. Collins and Dan put in an early appearance; the latter seemed calm, but sufficiently serious, with the thought of a poor man being forced thus to cry out for withholding of hard-earned wages. At the sounding of the case, both parties announcing themselves ready, the magistrate said:

"Then perceed with the case; Mr. Hickson have the flo' first."

To be accurate, this was a figure of speech; for, being a hot day, the Court removed from the small building, and seated itself beneath a white-oak tree near by.

Of the four witnesses summoned the first, after proving the bill, was turned over to the defendant for cross-examination.

"I got no question for the witness," said the latter. "Every word he have swore to is nothing but the God's truth!" The like occurred with the second. When the third was put forth one of the by-standers, voicing the general sentiment of rising disgust, said to Dan, loud enough to be heard by several:

"What you keep puttin' up witnesses for, Dan? Don't you see Mr. Collins ain't 'sputin' your account?"

"Never you mind," answered Dan; "I'm a-goin' to jes pile it on to him, to let him know who he's a-amin' to run over and squush."

"All right; go it, horsefly! but if you don't look out, you're goin' to be popped off with the whip," the interlocutor replied.

Plaintiff's case at length closed, and defendant was informed that the floor was his. Rising slowly, he cast his eyes in solemn retrospect toward his home and the memories awakened by thoughts of it. Turning again, without seeming to note the presence of the dignitary before him, he threw a general mildly appealing look around, and then began:

"Forty-nine year ago, on the twenty-fift' o' last December I were borned; and it were in this same county, and in this same deestrick, and that not a mile from where I now ockepy with myself and my own people in reason'ble,

mod'rate peace — untwell now. I 'member freckwent to have heerd my mother say that when I come, I come a Chris'mas present, which I've no idee she would have used them words if she had have knew that I'd live to see the time I had to be sued for a account o' fifteen dollars, and that by sech a man as Dan Hickson. No, I honest believe sech as that were far be it from the mouth o' that honor'ble female; that I've not a doubt on the mind of all that knewed her when she died the twentit' o' this last Aperl she went straight to mansion in the sky."

It was a good exordium; for evidently it told upon all present, even Dan, who scowled around as if to remonstrate against the insinuation that he meant to cast reflection upon the memory of the excellent lady to whom so pathetic allusion had been made.

"If my ric'lection b'ar me out," the speaker, after a tender pause; proceeded, "all the records in this county will show that I never has been sued in no court, little nor big, since I have been a man grown, and, in course not before I arriv' to that age o' discretion, umph — so to speak — untwell now. And in the first offstart of these few remarks, I say this case is nothin' *in* the world but a case o' puore spite; and I'll let you, my neighbors and friends and acquaintances

and feller-citizens, I'll let you all see just how it is.

“Ahem! My yard and horse lot wanted some little patchin' up, and me and Dan Hickson made a bargain for twenty days at seventy-five cent a day. I told him if he done it to suit I might keep him some longer, as there were some other work a-wantin' to be done. I knewed he wern't the carpenter he called hisself; but he have a excellent, hard-workin', good woman for wife; and it were because of her and her quantities o' little children I thought I'd try him, it bein' always my feelin' it were a pity that sech a fine woman have to put up with jest sech a man *as* Dan Hickson is.”

Here everybody, except Dan and Squire Co-field, laughed heartily.

“Well,” continued the defendant, “Dan Hickson showed hisself a poorer workman than I had honest took him for; *and* so when his time were out I told him I has no further use for his services, but that there were his fifteen dollars, and I took out my pocket-book. Then he up, he did, and he riz into a passion, and he declar' he won't take the money, but is a-goin' to sue me for it. First time I see him arfter that I told him there were his money if he'd step in Mr. Huckaby's store and give me a receipt for it. He never noticed me no more'n I'd been a hound-dog.

And so, first thing I knewed, here comes Jeems Hutchins with a summons. And now I ask the question if my friends and neighbors think it's fa'r, and if it's right betwix' man and man for me to be flung in the cost by Dan Hickson, who, if he deny my words, I'm ready to prove 'em every one. These is all the remarks it lay on my mind to say on the present occasion."

This address was followed by looks and murmurings that made Dan hang his head in silence.

"Take the case, gent'men o' the jury," charged the magistrate, "and decide it accordin' to your idees betwix' man and man, the pla'ntuff and the defen'ant."

After a very few minutes the jury, returning from another oak to which they had repaired, rendered the following:

"We, the jury, find this a case o' spite; and our verdi't is the pla'ntuff Dan Hickson be flung in the cost."

Dan, seizing his hat, betook himself away.

"Come back here, Dan Hickson," cried Squire Cofield, "and pay them cost; the jury have found agin' you, out and out; and if you don't come back and" —

"Never mind, Squire Cofield," Mr. Collins blandly interrupted, "let him go. Here's his fifteen dollars; the jury have found against him, but I'll pay it, and you can take the cost out of

that. I'll make it up some way to the creatur's family. Dollar eighteen and three quarter cent, ain't they? Yes, well, take it out, and I'll make it up somehow. But my advice would be to you to be more keerful how you send your summons to people that you obleeged to know they ain't a-wantin' to dodge nothin' that's accordin' to law and jestice."

After he had gone, one of the men said:

"Had no idee Mr. Collins was sech a pleader. When he brung in his ma, I declar' I were a'most fit to cry; for I knowed her, and she were as perfec' a saint in her old age as ever trod grit in Warren County. It's to be now hoped that Black Dan'll let out some o' the fool that's always been in him."

MR. PEA NEARLY NONPLUSSED

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MR. BENJAMIN PEA, even in his youth, had been addicted to forgetfulness and absence of mind. As he grew older these infirmities increased, and now that he was quite old, it happened more frequently than ever that he became what he called "wery nigh nonplushed." Such was the kindness of his heart, however, that he was always ready to apologize, and, when possible, make amends for his mistakes.

"I have fit agin it all my life-time," he would say sometimes, in a deploring way; "but when a thing is jes' *borned* with a person, he may fight agin it, but he can't whip it clean, out and out. But I don't think I were ever quite as nigh bein' of nonplushed as I were with Billy Owens, twicet in Agusty."

And this is the way it happened. Robert and William Owens, neighbors, but never intimates of Mr. Pea, had removed, fifteen years before, to Augusta, where they had been doing as well as they could in various vocations. The brothers, though somewhat, were not alike sufficiently to

embarrass anybody in distinguishing between them except just such a man as Uncle Ben Pea, as he was wont to be called. Uncle Ben made one visit a year to that city, so loved, so honored, so magnified by the Middle Georgia country people of that time. A few months before one of these visits, the news had come to the neighborhood that William Owens' wife had died. Uncle Ben heard it with the rest, and though he had never thought much of Billy Owens, yet he pitied, he said, the poor fellow, because *he* knew what it was himself; for Uncle Ben was, and had been for many years, a widower, and so remained until his death. Billy Owens' bereavement, however, had not made so profound an impression on Mr. Pea's mind as to be there when it would have been especially desirable to that kind-hearted man.

On the occasion of one of his yearly visits to Augusta he had just disposed of his load of cotton, and, turning from McIntosh into Broad Street, was proceeding with the prudent observation which gentlemen from the country were wont to make in order to guard securely against getting lost in a town so vast, when he was startled by hearing himself loudly but most cordially saluted by name, and felt himself pressed heavily but most fondly upon the shoulder.

"How *are* you, Uncle Ben?"

Turning, he recognized, after a brief scrutiny, that it was Mr. William Owens. It required some scrutiny though, because Mr. Owens looked so uncommonly spruce.

"Why—Bob; no, it's—yes—it's Billy Owens. Why, Billy, I never seed you look better. I needn't to ask how *you* are; how's your wife and—all the rest of—the fambly?"

Mr. Pea did not know whether Mr. Owens had any children or not.

"How's your wife, Billy? how's that good 'oman?" Affectionate is the word to characterize Mr. Pea's language and his tone.

Mr. Owens' cordial freedom subsided for an interval. Removing his new fur hat, he placed his hand respectfully upon the crape, and softly replied:

"My wife, Uncle Ben? Why, she's dead. I supposed you'd heard about it."

Mr. Pea laid his finger upon his nose (his own nose of course), a habit he had, as if such action helped him in recalling things he ought not to have forgotten.

"Billy, I beg your pardon. It seems to me that I did hear of Mrs. Owens's death, and that I were very sorry to hear of it. Cert'nly, Billy, I did hear of it; but—you—you looked so well, Billy, that"—Uncle Ben, though a man

that rather prided himself on his veracity, felt that a little story would be no great sin in the circumstances — “that I thought it must be — a — kind of a — mistake, Billy.”

“No, Uncle Ben,” answered Mr. Owens, smoothing the fur that was uncovered; “the news was true. It come nigh killin’ me, Uncle Ben. One time it ’peared like it would kill me. But I had my business to attend to, and so I tried to keep up as well as I could.”

“Right, Billy. I’m glad you took them views, Billy. When a man like you and me, Billy, loses their wives —”

But just at that moment a lady, youngish, rather handsome, and rather afflicted looking, passed down the street by the gentlemen. She was dressed in black, though there was white on her wrists, around her neck, and in the inside of her bonnet. She bowed distantly as she passed.

“Well, good-bye, Uncle Ben,” said Mr. Owens, placing his hat on one side of his head, “I have to go,” and Mr. Owens went on down the street.

“I were mighty nigh nonplushed, Bob,” Mr. Pea said shortly afterwards to his brother on meeting him and telling of his mistake.

“Oh, Billy ’ll git through, Uncle Ben. He’s young yit awhile. Billy’s all right.”

"I think so, Bob," said Mr. Pea. "Billy looks like he'd pull through."

Yet Mr. Pea said he had been monstrous nigh bein' of badly nonplushed, and Miss Georgiana, his daughter and only child, was much amused by his account of it.

At about the same time of the next year Mr. Pea was on his yearly visit to the famous city. He was just coming out of the store of the Carmichaels, and a boy was carrying to his wagon a shovel and a pair apiece of fire-tongs and and-irons. At that moment, Mr. William Owens came walking down Broad Street. From his hat the crape was absent, and its own spruceness and that of his remaining self departed. His gait and his mien were serious, but at the sight of his old neighbor he brightened up somewhat.

"Why, if it ain't Uncle Ben Pea." Then he seized Mr. Pea by the hand.

Mr. Pea was a rather short man, stout. Both the Owensens were tall. After another brief scrutiny, and apparent satisfaction therewith, Mr. Pea said in the tone a man would be apt to employ to persons who had expected to catch him napping, and had found him wide awake:

"Oh — yes, Owens. It's Bob Owens. How d'ye, Bob? How's your fambly? Poor Billy, *he's* dead, I know. I was sorry to hear it. So was Georgie Ann. We was both very sorry

to hear it. How's his poor widow and — the rest of his fambly genilly?"

"Dead! Uncle Ben!" answered Mr. Owens. "Dead! Why, *I'm* Billy Owens."

"Why, bless my soul," cried Mr. Pea, not loudly, though. There were too many persons passing on the street for that. Only Mr. Carmichael heard him.

Mr. Pea looked down, laid his finger along the full length of his nose, slightly lifting his spectacles in the action. Then looking up again he said:

"Why, cert'nly, Billy. What was I talkin' about? It's your wife that's dead. You're a widower now, Billy, poor fellow, like me."

"No, Uncle Ben, not now."

Mr. Carmichael had gotten behind the door, and, as he could not hold it up, had laid his head against the wall. Mr. Owens saw him peeping through the crack above one of the hinges. The embarrassment of Mr. Pea now seemed as if it was going to turn to anger.

"Billy Owens," he said sternly, "don't be tryin' to make a fool outen me."

"I ain't, Uncle Ben," answered Mr. Owens. With Mr. Pea in front, and Mr. Carmichael at the crack of the door, he did not know whether to cry or to laugh.

"I ain't, Uncle Ben. It's my *first* wife

you're thinkin' about. *She's* dead, and I'm married agin."

Mr. Pea removed his finger from his nose, readjusted his spectacles, looked up at Mr. Owens thoughtfully, and studiously laid both his hands upon the lapels of Mr. Owens' coat, then very slowly said: "Billy—they ain't—none o' you dead, then—at the present?"

"No, Uncle Ben, I'm thankful to say that I'm yit a livin' and — "

"And your wife, Billy, *she's* dead—ah, that is, in course, your first wife?"

"Yes, sir," feebly responded Mr. Owens, as he saw through the crack Mr. Carmichael getting down upon his knees.

Mr. Pea, yet pressing his lapels, and looking intently at Mr. Owens, said:

"I'm truly glad to hear it, Billy—that is, that none o' you are dead—at the present. And—I hope that none of you never—" But this seemed to be going too far; for Mr. Pea was obliged to know that the Owenses could not be expected to become an exception to the law of universal human mortality.

"That is—Billy—for the present. I'm so glad to hear it, Billy." Mr. Pea looked at Mr. Owens and pressed his lapels as if he would like to take him in his arms as one escaped from death, and bear him away from possible

reach of the monster. He repeated yet once again, looking the while with fondest affectionateness:

"I'm so glad to hear it, Billy. And, Billy, if anything *do* happen, won't you, or won't you leave word for somebody to send me a letter, and—but pshaw! Sich a thing ain't goin' to happen in *my* day—well, good-by, Billy."

When he had gone, "Mr. Carmicol!" said Mr. Pea, looking around.

Mr. Carmichael came forth from behind the door, coughing and blowing his nose as if he had taken sudden violent cold.

"Well, upon my word, Mr. Carmicol, I were never nigher of bein' of nonplushed than jes' now with Billy Owens, that is, for a while. You see, it's the second time. When I see him last year, he were so spry and gaily like, I thought I mout be mistaken about his wife bein' dead; a purvidin' I ever heerd it, and which Georgian say we did hear it; and when I see him jes' now so serous and cast down, I got the idee that it were him that were dead instid of his wife, and that *he* were Bob. You see, Mr. Carmicol, I never knowed 'em intimate nohow, though I never knowed anything in particular agin 'em. Well, he looked peerter when he were a widower, than he do now sence he's

married agin. I 'spect Billy over-cropped hisself the last time."

"That's what they say, Mr. Pea," answered Mr. Carmichael. "He married the widow Beardsley, and they tell me that she's the captain of the concern."

"I knowed it, and it's mighty apt to be the case in ginerall. But I don't think I were ever nigher of bein' of nonplushed—for a while. I got out of it though tollerble, didn't I, Mr. Carmicol?"

"Elegantly, Mr. Pea, elegantly."

"You know, Mr. Carmicol, I've always been sort o' forgitful and abson-minded; and I've had to brace myself agin it. It's not often they ketches me clean out and out. But I don't 'member when I were nigher to it than jes' now with Billy Owens. You think I got out pretty well, eh?"

"Oh, elegantly, elegantly."

"I'm glad of it. I'm even thankful, Mr. Carmicol. You see, Mr. Carmicol, I got Billy for a while, jes' for a while—I got Billy sorter mixed up 'ith—'ith—you may say—a couple o' wimming at wunst, an' a leetle mo' and I mout of lost my holt on him, and of hurted poor Billy's feelinks, and which I wouldn't of done that nohow in the world ef it could be hendered. I jes' did 'scape it, like a feller

that's shot at and missed. It's all practice 'ith me, Mr. Carmicol; it's every bit of it practice. For practice, you know, so they say, makes perfic. Hadn't been for practice, I mout of been of non-plushed clean, out an' out, an' of hurted poor Billy's feelinks, which I wouldn't of done for nothin' in the world, and 'special him in the fix he 'pear to be in at the present."

LOST

LOST

WHEN I was a child I used to speculate, in a child's way, on those parables of our Lord regarding the woman's lost penny and the one lost sheep of the shepherd. The wonder was how concern for the missing could become so absorbing as to be excluded from the remaining ninety and nine. Experiences and observations in time have not only made those teachings intelligible to me, but they seem among the very wisest and most benignant that come from that divine source. Aside from the reproach that a loser cannot avoid taking upon himself for real or imagined lack of vigilance, when a possession, even of small or moderate value, has been lost, such reproach, without parting from its own peculiar poignancy, is usually accompanied by a feeling of compassion which, in the case of inanimate things, but for its oft occurrence, would seem most strange and be named most absurd. Of course, when such loss is of a human being, and one among the dearest, such emotions are natural, and perhaps the most anguishing that the human heart ever is made to suffer.

I have been thinking lately of a case that I became acquainted with many years ago. I had frequent occasion to visit an elderly gentleman residing just outside the limits of a village in another county than mine. In the drawing-room of his mansion were several pictures, mainly family portraits. One of these I often regarded with much interest. It was of a boy child, apparently four or five years old. It was extremely beautiful, the expression being so lovely and innocent as to seem almost celestial. My old friend never made allusion to it, and I do not recall if I ever saw his face turned in its direction. His habit was to meet me in that room, wherein I had been shown by a servant, and then lead to his library.

One day, as he entered silently, I was standing before the picture. As I turned, I remarked how strikingly interesting it was.

"Yes," he answered simply, "the child for whom it was taken was uncommonly lovely. Will you come with me into the library?"

To my surprise he referred not again to the subject, but led straightway to another.

It was years afterwards that one morning as I was approaching the house I noticed a well-dressed, fair-looking old man with long, white hair on his head and face leaning upon a large gate at a corner of the yard through which

vehicles were wont to pass to the rear of the mansion. He seemed in deep meditation, and, at the sound of my advance, turned and slowly moved away. On entering the house I mentioned this fact to my friend.

“Yes, yes,” he answered. “Take a chair. In a minute or so I’ll tell you about him.”

He retired for a brief while, and returning, thus said :

“He is the child whose picture in the next room I remember you taking an interest in some time back. He is the same, the very same to me that he was then, and sometimes, indeed, I believe that he is the same to the Almighty Creator who suspended the best part of his being only a few days after that picture was made. He was so fair and otherwise attractive that my wife, his mother, wished for him to be painted, and it was done. We were then residing on a large plantation owned by me in one of the older counties. Our cattle and some other beasts were suffered to roam at large, getting sufficient living in the woods and outlying, untended fields. Young negroes toward evening used to go forth in order to bring the lagging milch-cows to their pen. One evening this child asked the children to be taken with them, and, on their refusing, and running away from him, unknown to them and any person at

the house he followed, and became lost in the wood."

He paused for a moment, then continuing, said :

"The matter, in a very little while, was made known throughout the neighborhood; and by several parties during that night, the following day and night, search was made. On the next morning he was found within half a mile of the house, standing in a shallow pool of water. He paid no attention to the triumphant shouting of the finders, but on his face was the serenity which, if you had been near enough just now, you would have observed. He spoke not a word, nor has he spoken a word since. His understanding had been uncommonly bright, so his parents and other acquaintances regarded; but from that day, more than fifty years ago, never a ray of intelligence has apparently come to it beyond what belongs instinctively to the lower classes in animate existence. If he has ever had suffering of any sort, it has never been known. He sits most of the day in his own chamber on the ground floor underneath my own, occasionally going forth for a walk, always seeming in calm reverie. He has always been punctual to the periods of eating and sleeping, in which he is served by one of my men-servants, in whose hands he is as an infant.

Neither this man, nor myself, nor any other person, has he ever appeared to recognize. Since the death of his mother, ten years back, and since I have become much more sensible of my age, I cannot but indulge anxiety about the dear child's care. However, however," with an easy effort towards resignation, "I shall try to trust, as I always have trusted, that the judgments of the Almighty, as the Psalmist wrote, are 'just, justified in themselves.'"

To my old friend it was a mercy that the child died before him, and that his death seemed as free from pain as his life had been.

MUTUAL SCHOOL-MASTERS

MUTUAL SCHOOL-MASTERS

AMONG my acquaintances at the bar many years back was one who, not long after middle age having attained considerable fame and satisfactory fortune, had retired from practice, and settled upon a farm a few miles out of the county seat.

One day, while he and I were together in my office, he gave me a bit of his own experience that interested me considerably. I will put it down (as near as I can recall them) in his own words.

We had been conversing about difficulties often attendant upon the beginnings of young professional men. To some remark of mine he answered rather abruptly:

“Now, now! People may talk and talk about opportunities which they think they ought to have had, and what great things they might have done if these had not been unjustly withheld from them. In a country like this almost any young man can find as much of opportunity as he needs to start with. I’ll tell something, if you’ll listen, about me and my brother Dave.

“We agreed that we’d have an education better than could be got at the neighborhood country school, beyond which our parents’ means could not allow us to go. Dave was then sixteen years old and I fourteen. We got the notion somehow that to be ripe scholars we must know Latin, with which our late teacher had no acquaintance.

“One day, after we had been for some time speculating upon the subject, Dave said: ‘Dan, my sakes! Why can’t we teach ourselves? You me, and I you? I believe we can do it if we’ll begin right, study hard, make good rules and stick to ’em.’ Now you may not believe it; but that very notion had been gradually forming in my mind.

“So with our own little moneys we bought one Adams’ ‘Latin Grammar’ and one ‘Historiæ Sacræ,’ and in what holidays we got from work on the farm we kept school and went to school in a fodder house just behind the horse lot. At the other school, during the seasons father could afford to send us, we had picked up a good deal in arithmetic and English grammar, and it surprised and delighted us, that, principles of syntax being much alike in both, we found our task less difficult than we had apprehended.

“When mother found what we were doing (for we had not told her until fairly started),

she besought father to increase our holidays. At first he refused, saying it was mere nonsense, Dave's and my attempting to teach each other what neither of us knew one single, blessed thing about. Yet, yielding to her affectionate persistence, he assented, saying that, although the work on the farm (always the case) was pressing, he would give us, besides Saturday, that we'd been having, Tuesday and half of Thursday. That is, for a while, to see if anything was to come of it. If not, the thing had to stop, at least so far as extra holidays were concerned.

"We agreed, Dave and I, that the discipline was to be as strict as that in other schools, which you and I know was altogether of another sort from the lax, persuasive, cajoling in these days. We were to give and take genuine, good, long lessons, and then get them. If we didn't we were to keep and be kept in at dinner hour and evening, and make and be made to get them over again, not omitting advancing tasks, and say and be made to say them to final entire satisfaction."

"Well," I said during a pause in the history, "such as that must have been rather a tough trial upon brotherly affection, if you and Dave had very much of that article. Didn't you quarrel sometimes?"

"No more than is common between brothers

of nigh the same age, and not as much as we did before we set up our joint concern. The solemn understanding was that neither should rebel or complain in words against the other while in relation of pupil to master. We did what was more effectual than quarrelling. Guess what that was?"

"I give it up."

"Why, sir, we fought."

"Fought!" I exclaimed. Then I leaned my head upon the table between us, as if I would very much like to faint.

"Yes, sir," laughing with delight, he replied. "That is, each master whipped whenever such stimulus he judged to be proper and necessary. No tapping, either. Dave kept his hickory, and I kept mine, not less sound and seasoned. He laid on and I laid on according to judgment on the merits, I should rather say the demerits of individual cases. Occasionally we had to rub our shoulders and legs from the rigor of infliction; but we didn't break our rule, even by disrespectful remonstrance. Of course, such as that occurred seldom and only during the first weeks of the session. The interest imparted in the work, soon made that sort of discipline seem unnecessary. In three months' time we got through '*Historiæ Sacræ*,' parsing as we went (you know the Bible helped us out mightily

with that), and before the year was out were reading easily in Cæsar's 'Commentaries' and beginning to tackle 'Cicero on Catiline.' I'm through."

"That is a remarkable history," I exclaimed with heartiest emphasis. "What became of your brother?"

"He studied medicine, and is, and for years has been considered, one of the best physicians in the town where he first settled. Oh, no; there's nothing very remarkable about it. Many a poor boy, with scantier means, but with superior gifts, has done far better than Dave and I. It only tends to show what can be done by a youth of slim means and moderate understanding by searching for and making for himself opportunities instead of mouthing complaints against fortune for not bestowing them gratuitously."

MISS CLISBY'S ROMANCE

MISS CLISBY'S ROMANCE

— "Like a dull actor now,
I have forgot my part, and I am out." — CORIOLANUS.

I

As to the age of Miss Margaret Clisby, the highest figure put down among those who have known her longest is forty. To me, who see her now and then promenading on Charles Street, she does not look a day over thirty. They say she is even more handsome than when she was just grown up, her tall, slender figure being so graceful, her blonde cheek so smooth, her lips so pink, and her teeth so sound and white. Since the death of her last surviving parent, fifteen years back, she has been living with a younger sister, wife of Mr. Summers, near Mount Vernon Place. There was one, only one, romance in her youngest womanhood, whose ending, I have heard whispered, seemed for quite a time to weigh on her mind. However that may have been, now she looks as well content as her sister, or any other woman having husband and children to entire satisfaction. She owns a good

property, and it is well invested. Whenever one of her intimate friends, in jest or otherwise, hints of her marrying on some fine day, she does not blush, but, smiling and fanning herself, answers in words which give no intimation of any special view or expectation indulged in that behalf. It is just the same if any special man is mentioned, even when it is Abbott Sinclair.

On the opposite side, and about equidistant from the Place, the Sinclairs live. Mrs. Sinclair, who was Miss Clisby's cousin, died some years ago. After a decent period it began to be suspected that the survivor was beginning to turn his thoughts in the direction of another marriage. There seemed no urgent reason why he ought not. He was only a little past forty-five, keeping in his stout physique most of the activity and even the good looks that he had always carried. Then Eliza, his oldest daughter, nineteen, was engaged, while the other, Sarah, a year and a half younger, was too handsome, too sure of abundant provision, already too much followed by young men, to be kept from being the same before very long. And so the fact was that Mr. Sinclair, even for a longer while than he would have admitted to any person except one, had been indulging the sentiments of which he was suspected.

Now, Eliza felt herself intensely concerned

about it, particularly on Sarah's account. At least, that was the way in which she used to put her objection when speaking among relatives and friends of the family. Devotedly fond of her cousin Margaret, she would have placed her among those from whom she sought comfort and counsel, but for the delicacy which was in the whole thing. Because there was not one among Miss Clisby's friends and acquaintances who, if asked to express opinion about the possibility of her being won in marriage, would not have given it, answering candidly that, if the right man was to appear and offer himself, she, no matter how coolly she smiled and fanned herself, young, gay, lovely woman that she was, would find it both to her interest and her pleasure to say yes; perhaps not right down, but in time; and if he had some ardor and knew how to employ persuasive words, in no very long time. After thinking over the matter, what time their thoughts were not upon their own, and after several talks with each other, the sisters decided between them upon a compromise which, under the circumstances, would seem to come nearer than anything else they could think to being satisfactory. That was for their father, if he should prove to be absolutely fixed upon taking another wife, to marry their cousin Margaret. Having settled that, they seemed to feel somewhat relieved, and

awaited the first good opportunity to make him acquainted with their views of the situation. This occurred very soon. One night when Eliza's lover and Sarah's beaux had been dismissed by nine o'clock, on excuse of having some rather important domestic matters on hand, they repaired to the library, where they imparted and received the usual affectionate greetings.

"You retire early to-night, my dears," said the father. "How was it? Did you tire of your visitors, or they of you?"

"I don't think they got so very tired of us, father," answered Eliza; "but Sarah and I didn't feel much like entertaining, having something on our minds we wanted to talk with you about — ahem!"

"Ay? Be seated, then, and let's hear what it is."

"Father, people say that you are thinking of marrying again. Sarah and I hope it isn't so."

He rose, took a cigar from a box on the mantel, was very slow in lighting it, and when he was again seated said:

"Why?"

"Because it would seem like being hard upon us, Sarah particularly."

"Hard on both! Sarah particularly! I can't see how it should be so on either. You're think-

ing very strongly about marrying, yourself. Sarah, too, for aught I know. If she isn't, she will be, and when both of you are off, if it's a fair question to ask, I'd like to know what's to become of me here by myself? Is it to be taken for granted that a man in the situation I shall be then has no right to try to make some sort of provision for himself?"

"Oh, no, no, dearest," she said, quickly, and suddenly decided that it would be best to proffer the compromise at once, and so she continued: "Sarah and I have been thinking — indeed, we've been thinking a great deal about it. Taking it for granted that in all human probability you might think of seeking another wife, knowing what an affectionate heart you've always had, and how good you've been to us, we have made up our minds that we would try to be reconciled if you married — a certain lady that we love very much, that mother loved very much, and whom we know you've always thought a great deal of."

"That so? Who can that be?"

"Cousin Margaret Clisby."

He sighed, then turning to face Eliza directly, said:

"She's the very woman I want; but I don't believe she would have me. If I did, I would ask her to-morrow."

This brought the girls entirely on his side, and Eliza said with firmness :

“I believe she would. I’d be willing to bet my very life on it. She’s not too old ; she’s as affectionate as she can be ; and although she’s got a-plenty to live on, you’re rich, and you’re perfectly healthy, and for your age the very handsomest, youngest-looking, best-mannered man in this whole town ; and my opinion of Cousin Margaret is that she has too much sense to turn away from you if you were to ask her. I’m just delighted to find how we agree about her. If I were in your place, I’d go there right away — to-morrow morning. Will you ?”

“That I won’t — not upon that errand.”

“Why, father, I had no idea you were so scary. When will you go ?”

“I can’t say ; perhaps never.”

“Well, that is the most surprising thing I ever — I don’t know what to make of you, father. It’s the first case of timidity I’ve ever seen in you. Then, if *you* won’t go there, *I* will, if you’ll let me, and I’ll find out how she stands. What do you say ? Perhaps that would be best. She will know how Sarah and I feel about it, and, as it were, put her in readiness when you go.”

After reflecting several moments he said :

“I’ve no objection, my child ; I agree to indorse all you promise as to what I’ll endeavor

to do for Margaret's happiness if she will marry me."

"All right; I was going there to-morrow anyhow, and I'll bet you all I'm worth, or expect to be, that I bring you good news, or at least a prospect of it, if not a promise and a vision. Now, Sarah, we can go to bed, and go to sleep as soon as our heads touch the pillows."

When they had gone he sat smoking and musing until very late. Finally he rose, and said to himself aloud:

"I'd give all I have and hope to obtain, if this mission could succeed; but it will come to naught."

II

DESPITE the fact that her father, whom she would have preferred to remain single, was a party in the case of marriage brokage on Eliza's hands, she felt that it was very interesting, even to the degree of spiciness. She knew she had uncommon persuasive ways, and, dearly loving both of those upon whose interests she was intent, determined to use them, if found necessary, to their utmost, and trusted in her ability to compass what, everything considered, would be an excellent thing all round. So early the next morning she went upon her errand. Meeting her lover on the street, she stopped to say:

"Here you are, like another bad penny. Don't you ask where I'm going; I'm on *business*, and it's as delicate as important. I hadn't time to say even that much."

"Well, but, Eliza ——"

"Oh, you needn't go to well-butting; I'm in a big hurry. I'll tell you some time, maybe, if you'll be good. I must go now. By-by!" And she glided away.

After one warm embrace and two warm kisses, and after mutual congratulations upon good healths and first-rate looks, and after the two had gotten off to themselves for the confidential chat Eliza had announced upon entrance to be on her mind, she thus began:

"Oh, Cousin Margaret, I've got something so interesting to tell you, and it's about love!"

"Interesting subject, my dear; but I supposed you had gotten over the most exciting stage."

"Oh, it's not my case at all. I met Tom just now by the Monument, but I hardly more than spoke to him, I was in such a hurry to get to you. If I were to give you twenty guesses I doubt if you would hit upon it — although you might, that is, if you have been thinking about it at all. Well, I won't *palaver* about it, as they say, but tell you right away that we, Sarah and I, have found out, and only last night, that father seriously wishes to marry again. And

don't you know that we were distressed, and, indeed, scared half to death, until we found out who it was he's in love with?—for I tell you now that he *is* in love, deep, deep. I never knew anybody to be more so, never. Have you any idea who she is? No? I suppose I oughtn't to ask you, under the circumstances; but I hope in my heart it won't surprise you very much. Why, darling, it is your own precious self, whom I've always loved *like* my own mother, and whom it is now my heart's desire to love *as* my own mother; and last night Sarah and I actually added it in our prayers."

Then Eliza gave a filial hug as cordial as any prospective stepmother in the whole world ought to be satisfied with.

The response was not such as the ardent girl had hoped. There was no shrinking. Miss Clisby simply let herself be encircled in the round arms, and then smiled blandly in polite recognition of the endearment. Conscious of instant diminution of her own warmth, Eliza, resuming her seat, looked at her cousin with affectionate, eager anxiety. The latter, without marked coldness, but as if on a matter of mere fact, said:

"Eliza, your father has not mentioned such a thing to me."

"No, dearest; but it was because of the deli-

cate respect he has for you along with his affection, and because of his fear that it might not be agreeable to you, at least so soon after mother's death. But that is now four years gone, and only this morning father told me that mother, several times during her long sickness, said to him that, not only on mine and Sarah's account, but on his own, she hoped that after her death he and you would marry. To think that dear father has kept this to himself so long! I declare I think he has behaved beautifully, considering how dearly he has been loving you. And as for a husband, I don't know father's equal. That I don't, and never expect to."

Miss Margaret was doing a nice little something of embroidery. She stopped, folded her stuff, laid it upon the table by which she was sitting, then said :

"Eliza, I'll give you a bit of my history, if you care to listen to it. It's of no interest to anybody but me, and to me only as a recollection which has long ceased to be painful. Still I think of it sometimes, as I suppose almost everybody of my age does about things which used to seem of some value. Do you think you can bear to hear it? I'll make the story brief enough, I promise you."

"That I do, Cousin Margaret; I wonder you could ask!"

She placed her elbow upon the table, leaned her head upon the tips of her thumb and fingers, and said :

“When I was a girl about your age—and that was long before you were born—a young man made love to me. At least he professed to do so, and I fully trusted his asseverations. He was extremely handsome and in all respects entirely personable. I soon yielded to his persuasions and became entirely devoted to him. It was all so irresistible, and seemed to me so natural and so right, that I made no—indeed, it did not occur to me that it would be prudent or even proper to make efforts to hide any of the affection I had for him. It seemed to me as if my individual being was subsiding day by day and being absorbed into his. If I had been wise—no, I will not say that; but if I had been cunning, and made myself seem to have been won with difficulty, and when won, in danger of losing, except through continual devoted service—it is possible that I could have kept my lover. The being without these faculties, and something else besides, began in time to estrange him. No marked change had occurred in his words, spoken or written; but he began, as I thought, to look upon and accept my devotedness as something to which he was easily entitled, and to respond to my demonstration with gradu-

ally lessening cordiality. Hurt by his manner, I resolved to try the strength of his feeling; so one night, as he was about to leave the house, I said that, after all, I was doubtful if we were suited to each other. The remonstrance I hoped for did not come—not a word of it. He only said that if such were my views we might as well separate. I replied—it was all I could do—that such a course seemed to me not only prudent, but unavoidable. He left me at once, and never returned. Fact was, he had already turned away from me in his heart, and to a girl who, being very lovely, was a very dear—friend. He did not make known to her, at least in words, the feeling he had for her until after our separation, and she would not listen to his suit until she had talked with me, whose relation to him she had known. I begged her to regard me as out of all consideration, and counselled, if she could love him well enough, to accept him. She did so, and I have every reason to believe that they lived happily together what time the relation continued.”

Here she paused, and looked as if she were hesitating whether or not she should say more. The slight tinge that had been on her cheek during her brief narrative faded, and her subsequent words were spoken with deliberateness, as if it were a house, or some other item of property, offered for her purchase.

With something of a smile, looking at Eliza, she continued:

“Since then I have not once thought of marriage. I have never been able to understand how any one, particularly a woman, could love more than once. A love that is true love, it has always seemed to me, either lives, flourishes, and becomes fruitful, or it withers and perishes. The last is what mine did. Of it I may say thus much, and I will say it to you, that after some years came a period when there was no legal or moral impediment to its renewal; for the friend who, without any misconduct of her own, but with my consent and counsel, supplanted me, died, and I have been reliably informed that her surviving husband would be willing for me to take the place left by her. That is as impossible as if it had been he who had died instead of her. Perhaps he knows this already. If not, he will know it if he should ever seek to communicate with me upon such a subject. In all this I have never been conscious of any feeling of resentment. I admit that for a time my disappointment oppressed me sorely; but I grew to regard it as the destiny appointed by Heaven for me, and so accepting it, I have been, and I am now, very happy. If, after what I have experienced, I were to suffer myself to be persuaded to marry, I feel

quite sure that nothing but disaster would come of it. But that can never be. And now, my dear, I've told you what few persons know, and what I had not expected to tell to anybody. I know I can rely upon your loyalty and your discretion."

"That you can, Cousin Margaret. But I hope you will not object to my intimating to father some of the things you have said to me?"

"You may tell him all, Eliza, every word; but him only. Indeed, I'd rather you would do it than not, so that he can put me at once out of all his reckonings."

When Eliza had reported this conversation she added:

"And oh, father, I never saw Cousin Margaret so fine! Diana at the fountain of Gargaphia, gazing at Actæon as he fled before his hounds, looked not more commanding, nor, to my belief, was more unapproachable to a man. Did you know the one who treated her so? He must have been purblind or parted from his senses."

"Your Cousin Margaret must answer that, my child, if she will, as most probably she will not; and my advice to you would be not to ask her."

"Oh, dear, dear! it's a great disappointment to me and Sarah."

"Hah!" he ejaculated when she went out of

the room ; “Eliza did not know how keen was the point of her simile. I feared it—knew it, indeed. It was a sore mistake to let such a jewel drop from my hands; but Margaret Clisby shall never see me desireless nor utterly hopeless of recovering her. I will pay that much tribute to the past, and, if it must be, make that sacrifice, living and dying alone, as I am now.”

This was two years ago. Much of his time since then has been spent by Mr. Sinclair abroad, the house being kept by Eliza, who, besides her husband and baby, partially looks after Sarah. The baby's name is Margaret Clisby, and her namesake and godmother is intensely fond of her. There is that in Miss Clisby's face and manner, when in the presence of her former lover, or when his name is called within her hearing, that indicates something, none can say precisely what. Eliza has told her over and over, with, as she tries to believe, gradually increased impunity from frown or gesture of remonstrance, that her own happiness can never be complete until her dear father is provided for, and in the only way possible. There are those who confidently profess that this is to be. Others shake their heads, but in confessedly indistinct doubt. I have my opinion; but I have been so often mistaken about such matters that I decline to express it herein.

ISHMAEL

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It was in the month of May, 1866. At a table in a bar-room of the St. Nicholas Hotel in New York, Charles Dupont, a medium-sized, bright-looking young man from Charleston, South Carolina, was with a companion sipping a mint-julep. A few minutes after they had been seated, another came in, and, after looking about and ordering beer and a sandwich, went to a chair by a table near that at which were seated the two first mentioned. He was of olive complexion, that with his well-cut features and shining brown hair and moustache, made him strikingly handsome despite a pallor which indicated that he was not in sound health. He took his luncheon slowly, and apparently with little enjoyment, occasionally glancing towards the other table, and once, although he looked in the opposite direction, listening with evident interest to the conversation there. It was at the point when Dupont informed his companion, Henry Morris, a New York merchant whom he had known before the war but not met again

until now, that he would be on his way to Liverpool by the Cunard steamer Cuba, which was to sail after three days. Almost immediately after this announcement the stranger rose and went out.

"Do you know that young man?" asked Dupont, pointing as he stood at the bar settling his bill.

"No," answered Morris. "I've been seeing him about the hotels for a year or so, oftener than anywhere else at the *New York*, where people from the South generally stay. Once I overheard him as he was asking somebody there about Charleston. I don't think he has any special business, and I suspect he has money, as he always seems deliberate in his gait and wears the very nicest clothes. It is evident that he is an invalid."

"I am sure I saw him in Charleston several times last winter. That's why I asked you about him. Yes, Morris," he continued, dismissing this for a more interesting theme, "I'm trying for what can be done to build up the cotton business of Dupont Brothers again. Poor father, you know, was killed in the war; Uncle Pierre took me into the firm in his place, and he is sending me to Liverpool, hoping that I may get backing besides that already promised, and possibly stumble on other opportunities."

After some further conversation they separated.

That night at about eleven o'clock, as Dupont, seated at the same table, was ruminating with his late cigar, the person whom he had seen in the forenoon came in again, and taking a chair by the nearest table, lighted a cigarette. Dupont, thinking that he ought to do as he would like to be done by, thus soliloquized :

"That man, being, in my opinion, either a Southerner or a sympathizer with Southern people, wants to make my acquaintance. If so, I'll give him a chance."

Turning directly to him, he said :

"Your pardon, please, sir; but my friend with whom perhaps you saw me this morning said that not long ago he heard you inquiring at the New York Hotel about Charleston people. There is my home."

A grateful smile came upon the man's face, and he answered :

"Yes, the bartender this morning said to me that he thought you were the gentleman whose name I noticed on the hotel-register, and I had been intending, when I could find you disengaged, to beg the privilege of asking you a few questions about my native town. I was an infant when I was brought away, but ever since I have been old enough I have felt much interest in it. My name is Corson."

"And mine Dupont. Won't you move your chair to this table?"

With the faintest delay of hesitation he did so, and quickly said:

"I haven't been very well, and I am making arrangements to go abroad, hoping for good of some sort from the voyage."

"Ay? That's what I've been doing also. When do you sail?"

"I have engaged for next Tuesday, on the Cuba."

"Indeed! We were destined to make acquaintance, even if we had not met here. I go on that steamer."

Corson nodded and smiled as if he were pleased at the announcement.

"Have you ever crossed the sea?" asked Dupont.

"Yes, several times."

"Do you get sea-sick?"

"No; that is, not much so. Neptune, noting probably that I am rather a poor subject, spares me that trouble."

After chatting for nearly an hour about Charleston and the prospective voyage, Corson rose to go.

"I am glad," said Dupont, "to have met so soon a fellow-voyager, particularly a native Charlestonian."

"The pleasure is mutual, Mr. Dupont, I assure you. As I shall have some matters to attend to between this and Tuesday, I may not see you before then; that is, unless I can serve you in any way. If I can, I beg you to say so."

"Thank you, thank you. What little business I have in New York can easily be despatched without assistance."

"I'll leave with you my card. If you should find that I could help you in any way, I'll really thank you to call or send a messenger. Good-night."

On the card was written "Mr. C. D. Corson, French's Hotel."

When Dupont got to the Cunard wharf on Tuesday, he was pleased to find that his new acquaintance was waiting for him before coming on board. When both, after visiting their berths, met again upon the deck, Corson, leading to a couple of chairs, said:

"Did you know that you will need to have your own special chair? I guess you did not."

"Why, no. I've never been on a boat but three or four times, when going to Savannah and returning. I supposed that the ship provided seats."

"Not specially, and not comfortably. I'm

something of a traveller, and know what things are indispensable to comfort. Now, this is my chair, and that is yours. Mine, you see, is not new, having crossed the ocean before. Yours, which is just like it, I had brought from my quarters this morning."

"Why—why, you embarrass me by such thoughtful kindness."

"Please let it not be so. We are natives of the same town, and where my experience can be of service to you I think you should use it, just as in like conditions I would get advantage from yours."

At once intimacy between them was started, which grew constantly more cordial. Dupont was touched by what seemed affection in this man so handsome, so well mannered, so cultured. For he soon found that his education, mostly obtained abroad, was of the very best. He was entirely discreet in his attentions, mingling, although to less extent than Dupont, with the other (but only the male) passengers; yet his satisfaction grew more and more manifest when he was in Dupont's company alone.

On the second day Dupont, most unexpectedly to himself, was prostrated by sea-sickness, that malady which, considering the briefness of its duration and the absence of all sympathy from others, the well and the sick, is perhaps of all that

a man of sound body is ever tormented with the most disgusting, depressing, and demoralizing. In this Corson tended him as a mother tends her sick infant, and when the patient became fairly convalescent he declared to the constant nurse that he loved him like a brother.

"Bless your heart for saying it! Now you need champagne, of which I am going presently to bring you some of the best."

"That is capital," said Dupont when he had tasted it. "I think I'll give our steward an extra shilling for this."

"You will do nothing of the kind. I put in a basket six bottles for this very contingency."

"Now just see here, Corson, —"

"Don't call me that: call me Charles."

"You say so? Then I will; but you shall do the same with me; for my name is Charles too. But it seems to me there ought to be a limit to this one-sided goodness."

"It is nothing; but if you think it something, you will pay me back in kind some time, — after I'm dead, if not before."

The smile with which he said this was so sad that Dupont made no answer.

By the time they reached Liverpool each knew as much as the other was disposed to tell of his antecedents. Each was an only child, both of whose parents were deceased. Brought

away an infant, Corson, when a lad of fourteen, had been taken to Marseilles, where the family had dwelt several years, during which he was getting his education. Since he had become of age the weakness of physical constitution inherited from his mother had hindered his going into business, and he had been living upon the income derived from property left at her death a few years back.

They got lodgings in adjoining rooms at the Adelphi Hotel, and meals at one of the restaurants near the Exchange. Corson took the liveliest interest in Dupont's reports of progress in his mission. One night, when they had been there about a fortnight, while together in the smoking-room, he said, evidently with some hesitation :

"Charles, could you use five or ten thousand dollars to advantage?"

"That I could. Why do you ask?"

"Because — indeed, I thought during the voyage and since of doing so, but decided to wait somewhat longer — because it would be entirely convenient and agreeable to me to advance to you either of those sums."

"My God, Corson!"

"Not Corson."

"Well, then, Charles. Do you take me for one who would let a man whom he has known

for only a month advance him money without assured good securities?"

"Have you, or has not your firm, property on which you could put a mortgage? I ask only for the sake of the feeling you might have in the matter. I should have no apprehension about the loan, fully trusting in your integrity and your ability to discharge it."

"No, neither I nor the firm own any property except such as is already covered for as much as it will stand. I couldn't think of accepting such a loan from you, and I hope you'll not mention it again."

"Then I will not. I am not rich; but I have some investments which I could easily call in, and it occurred to me that if I could assist you to some extent, I'd like to do it."

"I thank you with all my heart; but I am sure that brief reflection will convince you that I am right."

The subject was not alluded to again.

A temporary position on 'Change was obtained for Dupont by an influential friend, who advised him to remain in Liverpool until the winter should set in. Corson during the summer months made several excursions to leading cities in Great Britain and France. But these were brief, and Dupont became more and more sensibly touched by the affectionate gladness with

which his friend met him on returning. On occasion of a few days' respite from business in the fall, he was persuaded to journey with him to London. Noting that it gratified him, he let him pay most of the expense, Corson respecting the delicacy which sometimes forbade this. Besides the most famous places, they visited several not now of great interest except for their traditions, as Crosby Hall (now a restaurant), where King Richard III. wooed Anne of Warwick, the spot in Temple Gardens where York and Lancaster plucked their badges from the rose-trees there, the churches of St. Dunstan's, St. Sepulchre, and others humbler yet, holding in their yards the dust of many whose names, known to only a few in their times, have since become immortal; to Tavistock's Breakfast Rooms, where for generations the dwellers and *habitués* about Covent Garden have gathered to the good things therein served; to Datchett's Lane at Windsor, and Herne's Oak at the Forest near by, which "The Merry Wives" made never to be forgotten, and many others. Dupont could not but admire more and more the strange youth, as the vigor of his understanding and the extent of his culture and observation became more and more manifest.

In this while his malady, tubercular consumption, grew rapidly. Generally very cheerful, yet

occasionally of late there were evidences of restlessness which were painful to Dupont, who by this time had become strongly attached to him. One day, it was in October, Dupont said to him :

“Charles, don’t you think that it would be better for you at home than here?”

“No, no, my dear Charles. I understand my case fully. I am better off as it is than I would be otherwise. Besides, I have no home, except, —except— I am going to sail for New York next week, in order to attend to some business that needs my presence, but I shall return when it is despatched.”

He went, and, against Dupont’s expectation, came back a month later. Dupont was shocked at his debility. Yet his late restlessness was gone, and his cheerfulness increased.

“I see how you are pained by my looks,” he said, when Dupont, who had met him at the ship, took him to his chamber at the Adelphi; “but —do you know?— I never have a pain of any sort now. Consumption gives a pleasing decline. I came back somewhat sooner than I expected, because I wanted to be sure of being with you when death comes. I am looking out for it, and am prepared.”

He survived six weeks. Dupont was with him what time he could get from his business,

and during the last week did not leave him longer than for a few minutes at a time. His only request was that a telegram, immediately after his decease, be despatched to a party in New York. He accepted Dupont's attentions with gratitude as delicate as profound, and often from his glittering eyes came affection unspeakably fond. One afternoon, reclining in his chair, after being in silence for some time, he whispered :

"Charles, my brother Charles, won't you kiss me good-by?"

Dupont kissed him. He smiled and immediately expired.

This was the answer to the telegram :

"41 WALL STREET, NEW YORK, DEC. 3, 1866.

"Yours received. The deceased, Charles D. Corson, before his late departure for Liverpool, executed and deposited with us a last will and testament, by which, after some small charities, he bequeathed to yourself the residue of his property, which will amount, it is probable, to about twenty thousand dollars. You are named sole executor. He requested us to notify you, after receiving intelligence of his decease, of this fact, and to add that in a pocket beneath the lid of his trunk would be found a letter addressed to you. We await your instructions in the premises.

"PIERCE & FARROW."

The letter filled many pages. After giving an account of an attachment between Dupont's father and his own mother, the daughter of an

octoroon woman who had been a slave, he dwelt at some length upon the careers of her and her child after both parents had decided that separation, absolute and distant, was indispensable. The mother and infant, well supplied with money, were sent to New York, and some time afterwards the father married. After the death of the mother, and particularly since he had become of age, he had had much longing to know some who were of his kindred. On the maternal side there were none, as his mother was an only child. During the war of secession he had been abroad. After it was over he returned, and during a visit to Charleston in the following winter learned of young Charles Dupont, and often contrived to observe him upon the streets. He was planning another visit, when, seeing Dupont's name on the register of St. Nicholas, he made his way to him, as has been shown. On finding that Dupont was to sail, he rose at once, and, repairing to the office of the Cunards, engaged a berth for himself. Touching in the extreme were his words of compassion for the pain which Dupont was to feel at the disclosure of facts of whose truth there were papers in the trunk containing evidences irrefragable. Hardly less touching was his appeal to him not to reject his bequest. The letter ended thus :

“My mother was so far from complaining that she became entirely reconciled to what she knew to be inevitable. Her feeling towards the only man for whom she had ever cared remained throughout her life, and often she said to me that he was as much entitled to my filial regard as any father whose offspring had come in legitimate conditions. Nor did she complain, nor fail to teach me not to complain of destiny. Never a tinge of shame was upon her face, nor its feeling within her breast, for the lower line of her ancestry, and I am thankful, yes, upon this bed of death I bless the holy name of God, that this has been the same with me. The will of God! Who can compass it! Who can approximate nearer than the fullest certitude that it is always wise, always just, always merciful! The bond-woman with her son must be cast out at the coming of the son of the free. It was right because it was in accord with the will of God, and his blessing, following the exiles, opened for them a well in the wilderness of Beersheba. So the rude Esau must yield his birthright to the younger, who in the womb of their mother had begun the struggle for priority; yet journeying far away into Seir, he there found peace and prosperity. My mother lived in content, and died happy. So have I lived, and, now that I have known you, so will I die. Farewell.”

When he had finished the perusal, the survivor, weeping aloud, went to the bier, and, casting himself upon his knees, cried, —

“My brother! Oh, my brother! Why did you not — why — *why* did you not, why did not my own heart burning within me, make known these things before? My brother! Oh, my brother!”

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